THE CRESTING WAVE

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THE CRESTING WAVE

BY

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"Blue Anchor Inn," "The Millionaire," etc.

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THE CRESTING WAVE

CHAPTER I

INVENTOR OR PIRATE

William Spade's clearest recollection of his early youth was of the amazing frequency with which Sunday reappeared. For Sunday was a day of sackcloth and mortification of the flesh. The sackcloth was no mere playful figure of speech. Early in the morning, while the birds sang without and the sun shone in his window, giving false assurance of the joyousness of the world, he was attired in the hairy shirt of the martyr. Starched shirtwaist it was, with starched collar and starched cuffs, studded at the neck and wristbands with pins sticking inwards. If he examined the thing carefully before putting it on, there was no sign of these subtle instruments of torture. But as soon as it had been buttoned upon him, with much moistening of the buttonholes, and the necktie drawn up taut, the points quickly appeared, like the thorns in the Bible, and

set about choking him in the regular biblical manner. He was then removed to a smaller torture chamber, and his hair brushed by the application of great pressure—after which, while he stood upon one foot, his necktie was patted into just the proper shape, his coat pulled down, his stockings, already tight as a second epidermis, pulled up, a stray hair settled in just its appointed place, and he was allowed to depart, feeling like a wax boy in a clothing shop.

What joy did it afford him now to gaze upon the alluring line of sewer pipe lying by the curbstone, through the length of which he had yesterday crawled upon his hands and knees? Or upon the pile of damp sand, beyond the pipes, suggesting to his imagination bridges and caves and long tunnels that could be excavated by lying upon one's stomach and reaching in as far as the length of an arm? But for some reason it appeared to irritate his parents if he performed any of these joyful experiments in his starched white shirt and his Sunday suit. He had tried it and knew the disastrous results. Upon Sundays his mother's mind considered him simply as a symphony of clean and beautiful clothes, for which he performed the humble part of being merely the necessary stuffing.

He used to wonder each Sunday why his mother was never late for church. He would watch for the clock, knowing that if the hand passed beyond a quarter before eleven, she would consider it too late to go. But, at just that time, she would rustle into the room, put on his round hat, snap the elastic under his chin and behind his ears, and, thus harnessed, lead him forth. It was a mournful pilgrimage. He was not allowed to whistle or put his hands in his pockets. He was not allowed to climb up on the low stone wall which adjoined the sidewalk at a certain place and walk along its coping, as was his usual custom. He could not persuade his mother to alter her route by walking through a small alley instead of on the more pretentious street, although it was undeniably much shorter. She objected to the ash barrels and garbage receptacles, which to his mind were an interesting and picturesque adjunct to the scenery.

The church itself was doleful. Everyone conversed in strained whispers, concealing his real nature behind a melancholy solemnity. Upon one occasion he had attempted to inject life into the proceedings by shouting across the aisle to his uncle, a hail-fellow-well-met person in real life, their usual pleasant salutation of "Hi, Buster"—in a shrill, eager voice, but this had been emphat-

ically discouraged by both his mother and his uncle. More than half expecting this course of action from his mother, he was bitterly disappointed in his uncle. This was, however, an illustration of the warping influence of the religious edifice.

At another time he had balanced his sailor hat, inverted, upon the top of his head and, cleverly placing his gloves one upon each side of the rim, had by moving his head judiciously from side to side, maintained it in equilibrium. This piece of good comedy had made an impression upon everyone for some distance about. But just as he had begun to feel that they were getting into the spirit of the thing, his mother, becoming conscious of certain strange noises in the pews behind, had deflected her attention from the first lesson to her son and removed the hat and the gloves, spoiling it all.

The only part of the church service that was at all bearable to him was the long prayers. Then he could lean forward and rest his forehead upon the pew in front of him and think out the serious problems of life. Or sometimes he would direct his languid attention to the gullible and trusting minister, kneeling at his little desk with his back to the audience, reading things from a book for

them to repeat after him. And sometimes they did repeat them after him. But more frequently they put up a game on the unsuspecting gentleman and after he had read a long speech, would answer perfunctorily with a few words and he, thinking they had said it all, would go on with more. It seemed a transparent deception to William, but, apparently, the clergyman never discovered it.

His opinion of this particular clergyman was not an exalted one. As he grew older, reaching the important age of eight, when it was no longer sufficient for his peace of mind to lean forward with his head upon the bench in front of him, he began to listen in a tolerant way to the talk that made up the church service. The fact that he now knew that the responses of the congregation were not supposed to be a repetition of the minister's words did not dispell the early opinion he had formed that this person was a visionary prophet who was responsible for the gloomy air of detachment from the world that existed within the four walls of the church, and whose words were always urging people on to an unnecessary amount of goodness. The boy did not know what narrowness of mind and breadth of vision were, but, with the placid certainty of childhood, he ascribed vaguely a quality very much like the former to

the reverent divine and a quality very much like the latter to himself.

Upon one occasion the minister in a sermon described how the Ark of the New Covenant in the beginning had been borne on its journey upon the shoulders of men, until the poles that supported it had become smooth and polished from the contact of human hands, but that later this arrangement had not seemed convenient and a cart—a new cart—had been built, upon which the Ark was thenceforward transported. To the clergyman's mind this unwillingness to continue to bear the burden had seemed to be a matter for criticism, and he had dwelt at length upon it, drawing what seemed to the eight-year-old conception an unsustained moral. To the practical and straightforward boyish mind, the building of the cart seemed to be a praiseworthy improvement, in that it accomplished everything that had been accomplished before—with much less effort. He did not see why the new cart drawn by its two oxen was the symbol for luxury and the shirking of responsibility; and the worn polished poles that had borne the Ark before, the symbol of devotion and earnestness. It was incomprehensible and bewildering to him. His only explanation was that it was a part of the clergyman's narrow and old-

fashioned view of life. But though he thought about the problem many times, he did not seek aid from his mother. For there was in his mind the vague conviction that he was allowing his thoughts to run in channels that would not be approved by parental authority, since he was certain that his mother did not question the reasoning of the good clergyman.

After many æons of time his ninth birthday came and passed. He particularly remembered the time because there came almost simultaneously with it a change in the method of living of the Spade family. They moved from the small house on the narrow street to a larger house on a wide street, which was furnished throughout with new things. What with three servants, dessert every evening for dinner, electric lights, and a door-bell that you pushed with your finger instead of grasping a knob and pulling it, the whole establishment possessed in his eyes an almost unbelievable air of luxury. Upon communicating this idea on one occasion to his father, his father, who was, as he always seemed to be, reading a newspaper, took off his glasses and smiled in the pleasant way the boy liked to see.

"I don't agree with you," he replied. "I liked the old house better. That was the house your

mother and I went to when we were first married. You were born there and your little cradle used to sit in the front room against the chimney-breast. A great part of my life is bound up in the other house. I was quite sorry to move to this bigger one."

"Then why did you?"

"Well, your mother and I discussed it and we decided that it would be better for you. I am anxious for you to have all the advantages that I did not have. We can afford it now," Mr. Spade continued. "I have been successful in my business and I want my son to reap the fruits of our prosperity."

William felt very responsible and grown-up to think that the change was made entirely upon his own account. But when the actual reaping of the fruits of prosperity came, he was not so sure he liked it. He found that he was expected to play with the children who lived in the vicinity of the new house, and they seemed to him, after examination, to be a flavorless crowd. They were fond of discussing their own possessions and of explaining to each other in what way their own particular effects and chattels were superior to the particular effects and chattels of the person they happened to be conversing with at the moment.

Or, if one of them possessed a football, and with a lordly condescension permitted others to share it with him, he was amiable as long as the game was conducted as he wished it to be, but as soon as anyone questioned his right to decide any disputed point as he saw fit, he would take his football and go home.

William usually referred to this squad as "sissies"—in their presence if he were especially irritated with them; and when they tried his patience too much, he would relieve his mind by making a visit to his former associates and telling them all about it. The former associates were a much more virile organization—if you called them rough-necks, they felt themselves complimented. When they knocked a baseball through someone's parlor window, they laughed and ran. If a blue-coated administrator of the law pursued, they dodged around the first corner, laid a tortuous course through a maze of small alleys and narrow streets to some un-get-at-able spot, and were never caught. For weeks beforehand they confiscated ashbarrels and boxes from distracted householders to furnish fuel for the election-night bonfire, built in the middle of the street.

They had a common enemy in an old German gentleman named Fischbach, who rendered him-

self ridiculous in their eyes by wearing a black skull-cap and smoking a pipe with a lid to the bowl, who aroused their animosity by refusing to let them chalk out squares upon his pavement for the purpose of playing hop-scotch, and who rushed out in a great temper whenever they played any of their games (none of which could be carried on successfully without a perfect bedlam of shouting and screaming at the top of each particular player's lungs) in the street before his house. This unreasonable behavior gave rise to the conviction that he was more than a little touched in the head, and established in the youthful minds a wholesome fear and at the same time a deep-seated hatred of him.

Therefore they used to steal up close by the window where he was sitting and, first tossing a pebble lightly against the pane, drop a piece of glass brought along for the purpose upon the pavement—*and run!*

In all these escapades running was the most exciting part. They never even witnessed the old man's bewilderment at finding the broken glass upon the sidewalk and yet perceiving the window pane still whole. Or, in the shadow of dusk, they would drive a pin attached to the end of a long string into the upper part of the window sash and

upon this string a few inches below the pin they would fasten a nail or a stone, in such a manner that they could sit across the street and by pulling the string and letting it go make a mysterious tapping upon the window pane which would keep the poor Fischbach in a state of nervous tension for half an hour or more.

But one day the joy of this enmity was turned to gall and wormwood in William's mouth. For the old gentleman, attracted by his brown eyes and laughing face, finding him upon this day alone in the street, called to him and showed him a new way of making the pointed piece of wood called a "pussy," which they used in one of their games. The heretical method Mr. Fischbach employed was to use a piece of wood square in section instead of round in section, which aroused in the boy the deepest contempt, for no sin is more unforgivable in the small boy's mind than the suggestion that he do any particular thing in a manner different from that in which every other boy is accustomed to do it. But worse than that was the bitter disappointment that the common enemy, the hated ogre, should have made friends with him! And not only made friends with him, but publicly—for he was seen by other members of his clan. Ashamed and mortified, he made his escape

as soon as possible. The disgrace rested so heavily upon his shoulders that it was long before he went back to this crowd, and never again regularly.

Summer came during this self-imposed exile and all the sissies went away—most of them to summer camps in New England, for their parents, unlike his mother and father, seemed to take more pains to send them away and to be away from them than to cultivate their society. William had noticed that most of them were responsible, insofar as they were responsible at all, to nurses and governesses and not to their fathers and mothers, whom they avoided and distrusted as they did guests in their houses.

Mr. Spade's business kept him in the city in the summer as well as in the winter. William had never known him to take a vacation—and his wife stayed where he stayed. The father noticed that his boy was having a lonely time, and on several occasions took him to his office, driving downtown in the shiny buggy behind the sleek sorrel horse. His father's office was in a big dingy, brick building, across the whole front of which was painted, "The Simpson and Spade Company, Bolts, Nuts, Roller Bearings. The Spade Gasoline Engine."

"Father," inquired William, after he had

spelled out this legend, "are you an inventor?"

"Yes," replied his father, "I suppose I am."

William's approving eye rested upon him.

"When I grow up," he asserted with conviction, "I am going to be either an inventor or a pirate."

Whereupon his father, much to his surprise and pleasure, began to laugh uncontrollably, as if he had said something funny. Mr. Spade's face grew red and the veins stood out on his forehead.

"Well, son," he said, presently, "that is a splendid ambition. Only you must be sure you learn to tell the difference."

One day his father suggested that it would be a very good idea for the boy to go to the seashore for a week or two, as he needed a coat of sunburn. At first William rebelled. Since no one he had ever known, except the sissies, went to the seashore, he was not at all sure that there was good precedent for that sort of thing. But when the ships and the sand and the prospect of bathing in the ocean were depicted for his enlightenment, he became reconciled and agreed to give the experiment a trial.

There was a person, it appeared, named Starkwether who kept a modest, retiring hotel on an out-of-the-way piece of seacoast, used mostly by

fishermen and, in the fall, by hunters, who was an old and trusted customer of Simpson and Spade. As well as being a hotel-keeper, he was a builder and repairer of boats, and came to purchase materials for use in this enterprise.

Mr. Starkwether, having been consulted upon the question of taking William for a couple of weeks, replied that this arrangement would be quite satisfactory to him, and that, as he was expecting to come to the city the following Wednesday on a matter of business, he would take the boy back with him. On the appointed day, therefore, William, together with a real man's-size suitcase, in which his clothes were all neatly packed, was driven down to the office of Simpson and Spade; and at noon Mr. Starkwether, with William in one hand and the big suitcase in the other, left the office and started forth upon the journey.

William's father had said that Mr. Starkwether was a Connecticut Yankee of a very pronounced type, and William, not knowing exactly what sort of a person a Connecticut Yankee was, observed the gentleman closely. After deep scrutiny he decided that a Connecticut Yankee was a large person with a chin beard and no moustache, whose eyebrows were very bushy and whose eyes

closed tight when he laughed, making a fan-shaped cluster of wrinkles at their corners. He asked his father if this was correct, and his father replied that that was the outward and visible sign.

William's first view of the sea was complicated with many and varied emotions—not all of which were due to the sea. It was five o'clock in the afternoon when they arrived at Mr. Starkwether's house—or hotel, as the sign said, although William did not think it was really much bigger than an ordinary house. He was told there was an hour before supper time and that he might run down to the beach and see the ocean.

It all seemed very wonderful to the boy—too wonderful and vast for him to enjoy. It was a spectacle upon too large a scale. All he had previously known of great bodies of water was the placid river he had sometimes crossed in the ferry-boats. Beside the ocean, this river no longer seemed big. The waves of the ocean came rolling in from miles away. It was incredible that there could be so much water.

The whole thing rather frightened him. It made him feel small and insignificant and alone—and it emphasized the fact that he was in a strange place, among strange people, and living in a

strange house. His spirits dropped to a low ebb. He walked along the shore looking for the shells and strange animals his father had said he would see there. But he found none of these things. There was a bottle half covered with sand on which he found blown the fact that it had contained Somebody's Yeast Powder. A soap box lay half buried in the beach, and round it the seething surf ebbed and flowed. But these were not matters of interest. He looked at the silver watch his father had given him, and found that it was but twenty minutes after five. And he had to spend a whole week here.

From far down the beach a strange animal was approaching, running along at the water's edge splashing in the surf. To his acute embarrassment, he discovered presently that it was a girl — a girl apparently of about his own age, clad in a one piece blue bathing suit and running barefoot in the shallow water. He was standing close by the sand hills back from the beach so that she had not seen him. He would have escaped if he could, but there was nowhere to go.

When she first saw him she stopped short and stood with the receding water curling about her ankles, gazing at him speculatively. This for but a moment, and then with an unnecessarily vivid

show of unconcern, she ran along again, splashing the sparkling water with her feet as before. He watched her until she disappeared around a turn in the shore, leaving him very much alone.

His supper he ate that night sitting silent beside Mr. Starkwether at a long table around which many people—perhaps a dozen—were also seated. No one paid any attention to him except to pat him on the head and say, "Good evening, little man," both of which salutations made him boil within. A fat lady, with a pronounced figure, sat beside him and when she ate, crumbs fell and bounced off the figure upon the table cloth. She had a napkin, but this was spread below upon the second line of defense, so to speak, and escaped unscathed. William knew it was polite to spread a napkin upon your lap, but in this instance it seemed a useless precaution.

Mr. Starkwether talked a great deal and told stories, at which everyone laughed—everyone except the fat lady, who enjoyed herself more when she was talking.

"When I was driving from New Haven to Canaan just before the blizzard of eight'n eighty-eight—" began Mr. Starkwether, on one occasion.

"You have told us that story before," interrupted the lady beside William, acidly, she hav-

ing had her mouth open to start upon an interesting story of her own.

"I'll tell it to you again," observed the other, good-humoredly. And the fat lady, with lips set in a hard line, sat through the repetition of this particular story—with every appearance of Spartan fortitude, which made it more enjoyable for the narrator and the others gathered about the table.

William did not understand why they all laughed, but presently he did not care whether he understood or not. For the girl he had seen upon the beach came into the dining-room and sat down at the other end of the long table. She had on a yellow dress and wore a yellow hair ribbon. A lady was with her who was evidently her mother. It seemed to him that the girl knew he was at the table and recognized him as having been upon the beach. But she did not so much as look at him. She talked very vivaciously to her mother and to the gentlemen at her end of the table, who teased her about her yellow dress; but, as far as William was concerned, he might have been the mere leg of the table.

After supper he slipped away and walked down the sandy lane that served for a street between the collection of houses and stores that in turn

served for the town. There were a dozen or more persons gathered about a building which appeared to be a general store, and the boy seized the opportunity to bury his sorrows in a bag of molasses candy. He did not linger long in the store, for there was a half-intoxicated individual there, who addressed several remarks of facetious import to him.

"Are you staying with Mr. Starkwether?" the man demanded, at length.

"Yes," William replied, as that seemed to him to be a civil question.

"Well, tell him I'm coming up there to collect that two dollars he owes me."

William opened the door of the store. However, it did not seem right to give the impression that he was going to deliver the message.

"I shan't tell him that. You'll have to do it yourself."

Then he shut the door and hurried up the street, half fearing that his questioner would follow him and force him to take the message. But it was after nightfall before he saw him again. William was sitting on a wooden bench by the fence that surrounded the hotel, listening to a tale of Mr. Starkwether's, when the gate opened behind them and the half-intoxicated individual of the

store, now perhaps three-quarters intoxicated, good measure, lurched in and supported himself upon the rustic table beside the bench.

"I've come for that two dollars, Ezra Starkwether," he announced, unsteadily.

Starkwether eyed him through the narrow slits of his eyes.

"To what two dollars do you refer, Peter?"

"The two that's coming to me for painting the keel of the *Mary B.*"

"I paid you that."

"That's a lie."

The other looked at him thoughtfully.

"I'll ask you to get out of here now," he observed.

"You can't put me out." Peter moved his huge bulk defiantly closer.

Starkwether rose. "I don't know whether I can or not, but I can try."

Thereupon he seized Peter in an iron grip and tossed him bodily through the open gate. The man lay dazed, sprawling in the sandy road, and then wonderingly picked himself up and moved away. Somewhere in the darkness he stopped.

"I didn't believe you could," he said, incredulously, "but you did it."

Starkwether walked with the boy toward the

house. William was tremendously impressed at the show of physical strength.

"Son," said the old man, "always be firm. It is a good rule to follow."

When William arose in the morning, he felt that his visit had lasted long enough. He saw that there promised to be but little for him to do here—no other boys, unfamiliar places, and a fat woman to sit by at the table. He came downstairs with the intention of breaking the news that he was going back home at once. But the fat woman met him before he had had a chance to explain his position, and in an elaborately facetious manner, designed to put a child of ten at his ease, told him there was to be a picnic that day and he was to be invited. This was very polite of the fat lady, and it would have been rude of him to refuse. So he said he would be pleased to go.

At the picnic, he proved to be the only representative of the sterner sex. The fat lady, the mother of the girl about his own age, and some six other females were the body of the party. The girl about his own age hovered about far ahead as an advance guard, and William, like a cartoon representing the oppressed common people, staggered along in the rear lugging a basket

(as chivalry required he should) weighing in the first place about twenty pounds and growing heavier as the journey progressed. He decided presently that his vacation was a complete failure. But just then, as if merely for the purpose of proving that the night is darkest before the dawn, a voice behind him—a silvery, pleasant voice—said:

"May I help with the basket?"

"Oh," he exclaimed, facing about to look straight at none other than the girl herself. "Is it you?"

"Why, I think so," she replied, soberly. "Pinch me and see if it isn't?"

She held out her hand. He took it between his thumb and forefinger. It was soft and very much like satin.

"I'm sure it's you," he said, and they both laughed. "But I thought you were very far ahead."

"I was, but I hid behind the sand-hills until everyone had gone by."

He picked up a long stick and slipped it through the handle of the basket so that each of them could hold an end and let the burden swing between them.

"But yesterday you did not even look at me."

"And maybe I shan't tomorrow." She laughed at him with an airy sauciness. She had a way of turning in her lower lip when she laughed and showing her white teeth.

This holding converse with a girl was entertaining. She said things one did not expect—it was quite different from talking to a boy—and after she had said them it was really pleasant to think of what she had said.

"And," she asserted, "I didn't know whether you were nice."

"Did you find out?" he demanded, eagerly.

She shrugged her shoulders and made a funny face at him, which made him burst out laughing. It was easy to get acquainted with a girl—and he could not help thinking all the time how different a girl was from a boy.

After this his vacation was not so tiring as it had been. The next day he put on his blue bathing suit, which was cut just like hers and was the same color except that hers, from many immersions in the sea, had turned a blue-green just like the ocean itself. At first he was greatly chagrined that she could swim and dive through the waves, while he could only stand and let the salt water break over him and impregnate his whole system, starting with his nasal passages and his ears, with

stinging brine. But soon he learned to swim and dive a little himself and was able to uphold his self-respect.

They spent almost all the hours of sunshine bathing in the ocean, running up and down the beach, and digging in the sand. Sometimes he would excavate a large hole and bury her completely until only her head showed. But she did not allow this often, for it usually ended by his taking advantage of her helplessness to tickle her lips with a wisp of sedge grass, which, while it increased his enjoyment of the situation greatly, made her furiously angry.

She invariably evened up the score, however, when they were in the water, where she was master, and could duck him until he promised better behavior in the future.

There was one enjoyable occurrence, however, for which she was never able to quite get even. They had a game which consisted of seeing how far each one of them could walk blindfolded along the edge of the surf without getting into the water; and one day when she was carefully making this experiment, he seized a paint pot and brush with which Starkwether had been painting a boat on the beach, and while she was at the dis-

advantage of not being able to see painted her bare feet a robin's-egg blue.

The ultimate result of this was tremendous and horrified concern among all the adults at the hotel. William's popularity could not possibly have been at a lower ebb than while all the various experiments of coal-oil, gasoline, tar-soap, washing-soda, and hot water and vinegar were being made, and even after the report reached him that it was at last entirely off, he was still frowned upon by all adults and great care was taken to make him feel the enormity of his crime. Even Ruth herself (Ruth Dunbar being the full name of the object of these delicate attentions) snubbed him until three o'clock the following day, and then, becoming bored at maintaining such a heroic pose, gave it up and was natural again.

He felt that it was going to be necessary for him to kiss her before he left—not that he had any especial desire to do so, but that he understood it was the regular, grown-up sort of thing to do. He deemed it best to attend to it so that if the question ever came up later, he could have the satisfaction of knowing that nothing had been overlooked.

Accordingly upon the very last night of his stay

as they were walking along the beach just before dark, she in her white, beautiful frock, he caught her by the shoulders. Not resenting this sort of romping, she pushed him from her with both warm hands on his breast, whispering:

"Billy, don't tear me."

The "me" meant only the dress. He remembered the words long after, in a half-regretful future, but then he thought only of his masterful resolve and kissed her upon her lips—to be sorry for it immediately after. As for her, her smile disappeared, and, breaking from him, she hurried to the hotel.

When he left in the morning she was not there to bid him good-bye. He thought then and often later that one sometimes pays too highly for following the customs of the world.

CHAPTER II

THE LADDER OF FAME

From the time William was twelve until he was sixteen, his education was taken care of at an exclusive and therefore expensive boarding school. His father wished him to have all the advantages of education that he himself had not enjoyed and to have the opportunity of meeting the right kind of companions, in order that he might turn out to be a man finished in every respect. He wished his son to have no handicaps—such as had been his. In his own modest appraisal of himself he missed altogether the fact that it was the handicaps and the striving against them that had made him efficient and successful; and, while he believed that chivalry in one's heart was more valuable than mere chivalry of manner, he hoped that mingling with children who had been well-bred would instill this latter in his son, because it was considered desirable by the world at large.

In the years William spent with these boys and in the visits to their homes, he learned the things

it was proper to do and proper to say on certain occasions. He learned from them that it was not good form to be backward and shy; one must always be at ease. He discovered that they had absorbed this idea so well that on most occasions they were abnormally self-possessed and self-assertive. For the rest they had not been taught, or at any rate had imperfectly learned, the considerations of unselfishness, obedience, perseverance and the homely virtues which his own parents had regarded as paramount. And just as William had once found himself regarding the rector of his mother's church as old-fashioned and as laying great stress upon unessential things, so now, steeped in this atmosphere, his growing and enlarging mind wondered if the teachings of his youth were not out of accord with the civilization he was entering. It was a horrible blunder for him to say, "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am," or "I am pleased to meet you," which were things taught to him as he had grown up—at the expense of much care and patience. If these were no longer correct, why was it not plausible that the puritanical virtues practiced by his mother and father in their youth were no longer applicable, or at least no longer indispensable?

During his stay at this school, he occasionally

visited the homes of the boys who were his friends. He was astonished to discover how unbelievably busy the parents of these boys were. One day they would be home, the next three days they would be away. A housekeeper, a butler, or the woman whose business it was to take care of the correspondence was left in authority during these absences; and being, or supposing themselves to be, too busy already, they adopted always the easiest course. They never spoke of unselfishness or diligence nor insisted too strongly upon obedience. They would say that the punishment for stealing the dessert from the pantry was to have only bread and water for supper, but they were always wheedled out of it. The strangeness of the training of these children who were later to have great responsibilities thrust upon them—who in a way could be looked upon as part of the great backbone of the nation—did not then occur to him. Nor did he imagine that the example thus shown him could have a moulding influence upon his life.

William liked best to go to the big country place which was the home of two boys named Wharton. Here there were tennis courts and horses and a swimming pool; and when the coast was comparatively clear, they could smuggle out shot-guns and hunt for rabbits and squirrels.

There was a strict rule laid down to the effect that they were by no means to have the guns—which lent a flavor to the escapade it could not otherwise have had.

It was at this place he had a surprising and disturbing experience. On one occasion, by some inadvertence, the boys were allowed to come home at a time when their mother was giving an important lawn party, and William, quite without the mother's knowledge, was brought along. This was a piece of ill-fortune for Mrs. Wharton, for she was having enough responsibility without the added one of corralling the children and keeping them from the mischief that inevitably followed in their wake. She thought she had solved the problem, however, by providing them with money to defray their expenses to a ball game in a nearby town. But the boys, scenting the fact that they were not wanted, remained—in hiding.

They had heard much conversation about the "æsthetic" dancer who was to appear in the open air theatre that had just been finished, and as nothing better suggested itself to them, they hid themselves in the hedge behind the stage. Æsthetic dancing was then new, and William did not know that the strange term meant bare feet and that the term feet covered the zone from one's toes to

one's knees or thereabouts. When the lady appeared thus he was covered with confusion and embarrassment. But to his surprise the throng of spectators before her were not disturbed—on the contrary they applauded her wildly. Yet he had always been taught that it was wrong to appear in public undressed.

His companions were not disturbed either and soon proved that they were prepared to obtain enjoyment out of even the dullest of performances. They were but a few yards behind the graceful figure, whose shining limbs moved rhythmically to a pleasant, dreamy waltz, played by an orchestra hidden, as were the boys, by foliage. The inspiration that came to the latter was this. Each put a little lead shot between his teeth and using as a catapult a toothpick obtained at a restaurant the day before, ejected the shot with great force from his mouth in the direction of the dancer. It was difficult at first to get the range, but when this was obtained the results were immediately discernible. As the papers said the next day, the lady's technique became jerky and spasmodic. And, in spite of the fact that her third number was to have been the "Spirit of June," her best known effort, she omitted it, giving as her excuse that the mosquitoes were annoy-

ing her—although it would not have been illogical to suppose that that fact would have assisted her in such an interpretation. It was a bitter disappointment to her hidden and appreciative audience that she did not return, for they had just learned their art, and they had many lead pellets left.

This had been joyous. But when the excitement of the interesting episode had worn off, William found himself again reverting to the disturbed state of mind caused by the appearance of the lady almost unclothed before so many people, and by the fact that those people had considered such an occurrence as proper and appropriate. The growing-up and broadening-out process in William's mind had caused him to learn and accept as right many things which he, emerging from the chrysalis of childhood, had previously believed were wrong. He was spreading his butterfly wings to gain a big view of the world and finding in the big world things were viewed differently. Here were persons whom he respected and admired who by their presence and approval silently asserted that it could not be immodest for a lady to wear as clothing chiefly a piece of thin material that looked like a veil. It was all a part of the

modelling of his mind. He explained to himself that these persons were taking a broader view of life.

He did not realize then how great a remodelling was going on in his mind. He did not realize that he was changing his point of view to fit a new generation—a generation that was changing the point of view of the whole nation;—to a broader state of mind, but to a more leisurely and irresponsible one.

It was not easy for him to accept the testimony of even such a multitude and apply it against his father's teachings, for his father was the person in the world whose good intentions he respected most. When he was with him his father's code of absolute goodness in every detail seemed just and reasonable. But he was an impressionable boy, and most of his influences were outside his father's house. The code outside his father's house he found to be an insistence upon goodness, decency and honesty wherever the lack of these things produced actual visible harm. Otherwise they viewed things broadly. For instance, they had virtually repealed the Fourth Commandment.

They had the advantage over his father, for they could be very logical and convincing about it, while Mr. Spade's case depended solely upon the

deep conviction in his heart. But William felt that his companions were modern and broad of mind. Unconsciously he adopted their leisurely sense of irresponsibility.

The greatest argument in his father's favor was his success in life. His inventions had enabled his firm to take a foremost place in the manufacturing world, and yet the details of his business he trusted implicitly to his partner, knowing that his partner ought to be as honest and scrupulously fair as he himself was. On that account he seemingly got in return nothing but honesty and unscrupulous fairness.

When William was seventeen he passed his entrance examination; and in the following fall entered college. It was understood that when he graduated he was to have a place in his father's office. Mr. Simpson strongly urged sending the boy to college, and Mr. Spade, who had the deepest respect for his partner's sagacity, readily agreed with him, especially since that had always been his ambition. Therefore the fact that the business did not need a college education for preparation to it, but rather several years in the shops themselves, was set aside and the boy sent to college.

College was a Utopia to him—an ever-chang-

ing, iridescent dream. His was the happy-spirited, optimistic, dynamic personality that the undergraduates regard as their own personal property. Freshman though he was, there seemed to be a niche already prepared for him. Whenever there was a rowdy demonstration in his dormitory house and a mellow bubbling laugh rose above the din, someone—Sophomore, Junior or Senior—would say, "There is that Spade boy." Sometimes Sophomores would visit him in his room, in punishment for his effervescent spirits, and make him sit in a china wash-bowl in the garb nature provided him with and row with matchsticks, or similarly attired, lie on the floor and give an imitation of a man swimming to save a companion from drowning.

But when he attained the dignity of the position as quarterback on the Freshman Eleven he was felt to have earned the right to the pursuit of happiness, even though a Freshman, and his laugh could be as mellow and bubbling as he chose to make it, and no one disturbed him.

He found the carnival spirit of the place to his liking. The free-and-easy life, the close companionship of men fired with the enthusiasm of youth, the absence of responsibility save for the honor of the college, the heroic frenzy of patriotism with

which they defended that honor—all made the world seem a rosy and glorious place.

He fell in with the undergraduate doctrine of the non-seriousness of life. Instead of gathering up energy and power for use in the big drive that was to come after graduation, the providing of which is theoretically the purpose of a university, the undergraduates regarded their life in college as a separate problem to which their energies were to be devoted exclusively. The world without they refused to understand. They would attack that as a problem when they came to it.

He soon learned that the epithet "grind" was a term of deep reproach. The midnight-oil student, who professed to have a vision beyond the mists that shrouded commencement day, was a creation not understood by the average citizen of the University. He was deliberately different from the crowd. College tradition, customs, habits, attire were of no importance to such a man, and this closed up every avenue of understanding between him and his fellows. The undergraduate body (a majestic and potent term) regarded the grind as a man who had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage,—the birthright being his youth and the pottage being the approbation of his professors and a little bit of knowledge.

Therefore the natural human willingness to slight study and hard work was given apparently legitimate excuse and encouragement. Everyone wished to enjoy the spirit of college life, which he would see but once, and no one wished to be pointed out as a mere narrow-minded student.

This was the training he received to enable him to meet the buffets of the world. Its fortifying nature was doubtful. It was like training for a footrace by riding about in an automobile.

"The trouble with this college life," his father would say, "is that there is no striving against adversity. You live under a sort of anæsthetic, and the troubles of this world go on without your being conscious of them. When I was a young man I had to fight for my foothold. You young men simply taste the sugar-coating of life and never know the bitterness deeper in. Now, I say, which is the better training?"

But William, confronted with this theorem, only half admitted the truth of it. It is the man well along in life's journey who is convinced, in his heart, of the worth of adversity. No young man, full of joy, physical strength and well-being, wishes to court hardships for the good it will do his soul.

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." This, Mr. Spade said, was the undergraduate motto.

"Why should I not do just that?" William exclaimed, stoutly. "I must live my life as it comes."

"Live your life as it comes," his father repeated gently. "Perhaps so."

He sat down at his desk and placed in a basket marked "Mr. Simpson" the sheaf of letters that lay there. "I am gathering my own rosebuds now," he said thoughtfully.

In the midst of events that followed William remembered this speech. His father seemed happy indeed. He spent his days in perfecting the work in the factory, seeing that no faulty material, poor workmanship, nor covered up imperfection was permitted to be shipped. Mr. Simpson sometimes objected, saying that purchasers would never know the difference, but Mr. Spade invariably replied that the aim of the factory was to turn out the best workmanship they knew.

When he was not in the factory he was in his own little shop, where he had recently perfected and obtained a patent for a revolutionary automobile device—an improvement on the then almost experimental method of ignition, which promised to double the business of the plant.

The irritating details of business his partner took from his shoulders. Mr. Spade read the outgoing letters only for the purpose of seeing that customers were treated with his own idea of fairness. He saw only those customers who were dissatisfied with Simpson's hard-headed dealing with their complaints and who relied upon Mr. Slade's absolute justice and impartiality. On the whole his life was happy and sheltered. He was no financier, and he had for a partner a man who most emphatically was. He was indeed happy.

As for William, the stir and excitement of college life, the striving after undergraduate honors, more precious than fine gold in the eyes of his associates, though, intrinsically, really of small value, were suited to his temperament. When he was awarded the privilege of wearing the college "letter" upon his sweater, by reason of his participation in one game upon the 'Varsity football team, he felt that he had reached an epoch in his life. And this in spite of the fact that he rarely wore a sweater, and, when he did, felt awkwardly flaunting and boastful with the huge insignia blazoned upon his chest.

Undergraduate activities left him but little time for study, but since faculty regulations made it necessary for him to obtain a certain proficiency

in his work before he could indulge in athletics, he kept abreast of his classes, and in so doing found himself unexpectedly interested in his work. There was a man named McMillan who gave lectures upon the History of the Renaissance, illustrated by stereoptican views. These ordinarily were considered as a rest course, for a man could borrow a set of notes from a last year's student and get the idea of the whole thing in one night just before examination. Most of the men went to sleep in the comfortable semi-darkness. But William did not go to sleep. He found the man full of ideas.

"Spade, don't look at me like that," McMillan, notoriously sarcastic, would say. "You seem interested. It disconcerts me."

This interest of Spade's was amusing to the class, the more so as he sometimes had diverting discussions with the preceptor, which the clan felt were for the purpose of killing time and were regarded as good pieces of strategy, because McMillan, if he finished his lecture before the end of the hour, would hold an informal and embarrassing quiz. One discussion was memorable—especially to William himself, who frequently looked upon it in after life.

"Gentlemen," said the lecturer one day, with

the half-bored air he adopted as suitable to the degree of enthusiasm of his class. "We come now to the Republic of Venice. Venice in the 17th and 18th century saw the culmination of a vastly successful commercial policy and as a result entered into an era of over-indulgence and luxury, the fuel for which was supplied by the wealth she had so successfully accumulated. I can point out to you all (and particularly to you, Mr. Carter, if you will put up your paper and live for a moment in the eighteenth in lieu of the twentieth century) that this seems to be the course of the great commercial nations:—first, energy, thrift, hard work, abundance of mental effort—in a word, all the great virtues coupled with ambition and perseverance. What is the result? Success, blazoned in large letters, wealth, power, happiness. Success begets success, wealth begets wealth. The zenith of all prosperity is reached!

"Then naturally comes a generation who have nothing to strive for, no further pinnacle to which they can elevate themselves and their country. But they have money in great quantities and time and the pursuit of pleasure is theirs. They buy every sort of pleasure. They sacrifice the old virtues. They must have comfort and ease. They

must not be disturbed by the seriousness of life. They must not be touched by adversity. Their religion must be mild. Their politics must be safe—they must not be interrupted by war or the rumors of war. Repose in their silken bed of ease must not be disturbed."

The man paused, gazing unseeingly at the darkened windows, his mind far away in the crowded plaza beside the grand canal, peopled by the purple-robed canons of Saint Mark, the duchessa, the maid, the courtezan, each behind her saving mask, the bright hued gallant of the Renaissance, seeking what pleasing and round limbed lady fair will touch his fancy, the music, the laughter, the bright eyes, the carnival spirit,—He rouses himself.

"Ah, Mr. Spade, I am flattered. Really a question?"

"Sir, I should like to ask what other commercial nations you class with Venice—you spoke of them collectively."

"Oh, yes—I will name Carthage, Rome. I might also mention, if you will permit me, the United States of America. Mr. Barton, will you kindly remember that the Renaissance means the reawakening and govern yourself accordingly. Your slumbers make me envious."

William Spade was aroused.

"I cannot agree with you in that last instance," he asserted, eagerly.

The room came to sudden life and burst into applause.

"Go to it, little one," they screamed.

"Just a little order, gentlemen," observed McMillan. "Mr. Spade, I appreciate your interest and I understand, I believe, why you make that statement. The only reply I can give to it is that, as I have said before, one cannot tell what direction the age he lives in is taking. But I will say that, in our generation, an amazing number of people have made great sums of money, and that our national wealth is increasing; so that hundreds of people have now turned their attention to spending where there were but scores formerly. As a nation, we are beginning to have leisure for pleasures and money for luxuries. That is often a dangerous sign. I give you this for what it is worth. Your own observation must complete the picture."

William was strangely impressed at this effort to scrutinize the age in which they lived, with an idea of determining its direction. From then on he found himself many times observing the world about him, in an endeavor to disprove or

fit in with the theory that the civilization of his era was exchanging momentum and strength for ease and pleasure—and discovered it to be a far-spreading problem.

It was a problem that spread to him as an individual, but William did not recognize this. It had not occurred to him that his companions of the past six or eight years—whose influence, beginning about the time of the episode of the undressed dancing lady, had moulded his mind to a tolerance of laxity and irresponsibility—were the forces to whom McMillan referred. Nor did he pause to think that, being in the midst of forces tending towards decadence, he would naturally be unable to see them.

He might have considered the matter more fully had not the serenity of his Junior year been marred by anxiety for his father. The demand for the automobile improvement for which the elder Spade held the patent had been steadily increasing, and, at Mr. Simpson's suggestion, an adjoining piece of ground had been bought at a very large price, and the contract let for an additional building in which the new device was to be manufactured—Mr. Simpson being of the opinion that the demand would soon far exceed the supply.

Just as this irrevocable step had been taken, Mr. Simpson, who had never known a day of sickness, retired suddenly to a sanatorium, suffering with what was described as a nervous breakdown. His memory for all his business transactions was completely gone. Strangely enough, his memory for other matters was unimpaired.

Mr. Spade was distressed. In addition to his sorrow at the condition of his partner, he had thrown upon him a great weight of extra responsibility. All that part of the management of the business which Simpson had cared for was now increased threefold, by reason of the enlarged trade due to the new product and the huge financial responsibility incurred by the new building. This building was much more sumptuous and expensive than Mr. Spade had desired, but his partner had assured him that from an advertising standpoint it was money well spent. But in going over the books of the company it became apparent that his partner's method of bookkeeping had given an air of great prosperity that was far in advance of the facts. The large expenditure for the new site and building was not at all well advised.

In the midst of this an infringement of the patent by another company was discovered, and

an expensive suit had to be brought against them. There seemed to be no other solution of the question than for Mr. Spade to pledge his whole personal fortune to tide over the emergency. He had only to hold on until the factory was finished and the suit settled and all would be plain sailing, for the increasing sales seemed to point to the fact that as soon as their exclusive right to manufacture the device was established there would be a huge revenue from it. But meanwhile he hung on the narrow edge between success and bankruptcy so that the slightest push would have sent him either way.

He kept the seriousness of the situation from his wife and son, and, lest the latter suspect it and leave college to lend his help, as the father feared he would, kept up his allowance exactly as before. It was a strain upon his financial resources. His creditors were becoming anxious for their money. A wave of selling drove down the value of the company's stock on the exchange. The creditors served notice that unless the impending suit was decided in favor of Mr. Spade they would institute bankruptcy proceedings. But Mr. Spade had no suspicion of foul play until he saw by the records that Mr. Simpson had sold all his stock in the company!

The suit was decided on the day before Thanksgiving Day; and, upon Thanksgiving Day, in lieu of a Thanksgiving dinner, Mr. Spade met his creditors around a table upon which lay no cloth. And that day, which was a day of great triumph for his son, was a day of sternest sorrow for the father. The same sun that shone across that bare table caressing the thin hair upon the bowed head of William Spade Senior, fell slantwise across a white barred field where thousands of people, frenzied with wild enthusiasm, called upon the name of William Spade Junior. The head of the old man—now an old man indeed—was bowed down by the weight of this first great humiliation—unforeseen and undeserved. The head of the young man shone to twenty thousand people as he stood waiting—waiting upon the threshold of great triumph.

He stood alone, as one upon whom great responsibility rested. Before him—between him and the white goal posts—crouched a double line of restive beings. The shouting upon the north side ceased—and upon the south side. The great seething cauldron of spectators was still. For an instant twenty-two men stood like a group of miniature bronze figures. Of a sudden everything sprang into action. Twenty thousand

human beings rose to their feet in a great heaving wave. A tiny oval thing shot from the mass of men to the hands of the waiting youth. Half the double line seemed to be catapulted towards him. He was enveloped in a mob. His brown head remained motionless, as in a surging sea; and, out of the midst of apparent chaos, the oval thing shot straight and true. The silence gave way instantly to a reverberating roar. Over the bar went the ball; and the twenty thousand lost their sanity, within the space of a fifth of a second.

The next hour was a period of wild, joyous delirium. William lived through it like a man intoxicated. His journey from the field to the dressing-room door was upon the shoulders of a throng of hysterical humanity. His last glimpse through the door was of a field all a-quiver with wave after wave of dancing, brainless, overwrought youths. The dressing-room, the *sanctum sanctorum*, was invaded by the privileged many, who swarmed about them while they lay upon their deal tables to have the envied muscles rubbed and kneaded and smoothed into shape. Lawyers, doctors, and great men pressed the boy's hand with the air of making room for him too on the ladder of fame. Men whom he knew only

by reading of them in the papers inquired anxiously as to his physical well-being.

At length, dressed and valeted by a dozen pairs of hands, he made his way through the throng to the door. A newsboy in the corridor without thrust a paper eagerly into his hands. He hastened up the steps to the training quarters where the members of the team and the coaches were gathered. It was a joyful, yet withal an important gathering, for they had a solemn and important duty to perform. On the first ballot they conferred upon William Spade the highest honor the University had to offer (pedagogues and deans to the contrary notwithstanding)—that of captain of the University football team. Let Distinguished Service Orders and Victoria Crosses dim their light upon this great glory!

While the ballot was being taken William looked steadily at his paper, his heart beating excitedly. Then suddenly it seemed to stop—and something rose in his throat. When they announced his name he stood up—dazed as though someone had struck him a blow.

"I am sorry," he said—and it seemed that his voice would not last until he had said it all—"that I cannot accept. I—am leaving the University—immediately."

Before anyone could speak he was gone. They did not follow, for they saw the headlines of his paper lying there upon the table. It was explanation enough. The cold type, blandly inhuman, continued to assert with exaggerated indifference the perfectly good news item that the Spade patent had been declared invalid, and that in consequence thereof William Spade, Senior, was a bankrupt.

CHAPTER III

ADVENTURE

The months following the failure were dismal ones in the Spade house. The Spade house no longer meant the big house with its rugs, its pictures, its curtains and its mahogany furniture—it meant the little house in the narrow street, where William was born. The humiliation of his failure and the worry lest his creditors should not be paid in full had driven the smile from Mr. Spade's face and had substituted for it furrows between his brows. Young William would frequently surprise him sitting with his papers lying beside him, gazing idly and unseeing before him. It would be necessary to speak twice to rouse him from his lethargy.

It was soon discovered that Mr. Simpson had been the chief factor in his downfall. Mr. Simpson permitted it presently to be known that he owned the controlling interest in the plant that was purveying the duplicate of the Spade patent. The decision of the court in regard to the patent

was all that was necessary to effect his complete recovery from the malady that had laid hold of him. He took charge of the new company immediately.

Mr. Spade then understood. When the patent had been granted, he had told his partner, trusting the man implicitly, that he had just found an article in a French engineering magazine which described vaguely a device similar to his. The astute Simpson made a note of the date of the magazine. This was weapon enough for him. It gave him an almost certain chance of proving that his partner's idea was not an original one, and therefore not patentable.

With this in view he had set about forming a new company and, when this was formed had had it openly put the Spade device upon the market, inviting prosecution. To a fair-minded person, it was an unnecessarily severe way of obtaining an advantage for one's self. But Simpson, whose natural way was the way of adroitness and stealth, had long been irked by his partner's straightforwardness, which prevented him from increasing his profits as he would have desired. Previously he had been bound by the fact that Spade owned the precious patents that were the life of the firm. But here had been a chance to leave, and take with

him an invention worth as much as all the others combined. It was true that it gave him no monopoly; but he had a long start on all other competitors.

Figuring shrewdly that the expense of the lawsuit and of the large plant he had persuaded his partner to build would cripple the latter to such an extent that he would be unable to conduct the selling and advertising campaign that would be necessary, he knew that he would have little to fear from that quarter. For the others, by the time they had built plants and installed the necessary machinery, he would have had a year's start of them and the prestige he would have built up in that time would never be equalled. No definite charge of fraud could ever be brought against him, even had Mr. Spade the money to prosecute such a suit. He had disposed of his former partner completely.

This turmoil in the father's affairs had made a similar turmoil in the affairs of the son. From having a career definitely laid out before him, he suddenly, without warning, found himself face to face with the necessity of deciding at once what his future course was to be.

In the hope of finding an opening for himself he at length visited a man named Barry, who was

a congressman for his district. Barry was a member of the same fraternity as William and they had had several conversations upon the occasion of the congressman's visits to the University, upon one of which the latter had assured William that he must call upon him if there was ever any service his official position might make it possible for him to render. This is the sort of thing congressmen usually say for the sake of effect, but William believed the man meant it, and wrote him a letter telling him of the difficulty he was in.

In return Barry sent him a note inviting him to lunch at his club. He heard the story of the failure through to the end without comment.

"I knew your father very well by reputation," he said, at length. "And the only fault I have to find with him is that he was a gentleman of the old school."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean he wasn't aware of the repeal of the Golden Rule—or at least of certain stern amendments to it. He relied upon his friends to be just as fair as he was and—well, the long and short of it is, that won't do. We are in a new era. We have a new code of morals, a new code of business. Commercial transactions have become so complicated that the old rules of morals do not

cover them. I do not defend Simpson. Far from it. But at the same time we must recognize the tighter, stricter, simpler rules of business. It will not do to rely upon the other fellow's chivalry. That is lost motion, and puts a variable factor in the equation. Hard and fast rules and strict adherence to them—that's business. Everyone has to play the game according to the rules and take care of his own scalp. At the same time I say this without criticism of your father, for whom I have the deepest respect."

William nodded. "You say," he asked, curiously, "we are in a new era?"

"An era in which our national prosperity has become so gigantic as to be actually cumbersome. We are making complicated laws in a frantic endeavor to govern what the newspapers refer to as big business. And all that it means is that there is so much money in the country and so many opportunities for making more money that we have to devise one-foot-in-the-trough rules to give everybody a chance."

To William, having no money, the fact that there might be too much money in the world presented itself as no calamity. The thought of the mad scramble after riches at any price did not stir indignation in him. He even failed to see that

the triumph of Simpson over his father was the triumph of a new bloodless efficiency over an old-time honesty and fairness. His father had been dull and a little too trusting, to be sure, but he had paid the world the compliment of believing that human kindness still existed.

Barry at length said he knew of a position in a street railway company in Washington, which he felt sure he could obtain for William, if he wished to try it out. It was not a very important or lucrative place, but if he turned out well there might be opportunities for advancement—especially if he had friends. As Barry said, night clerk in a car-barn was a humble beginning, but wherever he went he would have to put his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder. William had some time before come to this conclusion, so he said without much hesitation that if the other could get him the place, he would take it.

As a result some ten days later he found himself reporting at a remote car-barn in the District of Columbia, with his midnight lunch under his arm. His duties were not complicated. He had to receive the money from the car conductors as they finished work, pay the motorman and conductor their day's wages out of it, take care of articles found on the cars, answer the telephone, and be

general office man. From two until five-thirty no cars ran, but it took him a good part of this time to make up his report and get his cash to balance.

His salary was small, and he had to live in an extremely modest boarding-house, whose bill of fare it would never have been necessary to print, for one always became aware of it the instant one opened the front door, as if all the various culinary odors had been hung up on the hall hatrack.

After he had become familiar with the simple duties of his position, the almost unvarying routine became monotonous. At the end of six or eight months, he decided that it would add a little interest to his life if he had a secondary means of earning money. He had noticed that while many of the men about him had large families and on account of their small salaries were able to save very little for an emergency, few of them carried life insurance. An opportunity was open here—and in a small way he began to write life insurance. His direct, reasonable talk made him fairly successful. He made use of his modest earnings to join an inexpensive country-club, where he managed to keep himself in trim with tennis. Also he sometimes met here men who thought favorably of the idea of having their lives insured. The life he was leading was a strange existence. It seemed

as if he were some other person—a person entirely different from himself, who slept in the daytime, who ate one meal from a paper bag and the other two from a marble slab in a quick lunch room and who was a hermit, having no friends at all.

The people he knew in Washington who would have been congenial acquaintances, he did not call upon, for he foresaw that he would have to refuse all invitations, since other people enjoyed themselves at hours when he was working. His work therefore had to be his recreation also.

When fall came they made preparations to send a gang along the road to fix all the places where the wire connections between the rails had come loose. William, remembering a certain discovery he happened to make the winter before, told the superintendent that if he would wait until the first light snow he would show him how to save time. The superintendent waited, and when the snow came, William went out on the road in the work-car and showed them that wherever the track connection was broken, the heat generated by the current as it jumped the gap between melted the snow at that point. In this way they did in a half a day what it had formerly taken the whole section gang several days to do.

His main amusement, now that it was too late for tennis, was walking. After a good day of sleep, he would have his afternoon tea, consisting of eggs, coffee and griddle cakes, and set out for a long walk into the country or through the park. On one of these occasions, upon a rather unfrequented road, he came into sight of a girl standing before a big roadster, which sat still and contented by the roadside.

"I'm willing to bet," he confided to himself (this person being the man with whom he carried on most of his conversations now), "that she has an electric system in that car that runs a fireless cooker, self-starter, curling iron, and sometimes the electric lights; and it's all out of whack—with help twenty miles away."

He stopped when he came abreast of the car.

"I'm in trouble," the girl said.

He glanced at all four tires and found none of them flat. Then he looked curiously at her—the thing he had wanted to do first—and found a good-looking young person, with handsome eyes and a rich, clear complexion. She took his glance to be a question.

"I am sure I don't know what the matter is," she said, by way of reply.

He knew the type of car, for he had driven one

many times. He punched on the lights and tried the self-starter and decided at length that her electric system was in working order. In making this decision, however, he placed a great deal of weight upon the fact that the automobile was practically new.

"I never saw a car like this that wouldn't run if it had gasoline in the tank," he observed, smiling.

"Now don't tell me—" she began, and broke off to walk to the back of the machine. The gasoline tank proved to be quite empty.

"I hide my head in shame," she exclaimed.

"It's over a mile to the next drop of gasoline," he said, comfortingly. He had walked so many times on the road that he knew the geography of it by heart.

"In that case I'll walk there and have someone bring gasoline back to the car."

"If we could get the machine to the top of that hill, I believe we could coast all the way," he suggested.

There was down grade about fifteen or twenty yards ahead. By throwing his full strength against the spokes of the wheel, he put the car into motion and, with her by no means negligible assistance, for she was a healthy young woman, they pushed it to the top of the slope. As the

grade began to give it impetus, they leaped aboard and she seated herself at the wheel.

"Now don't put your foot on the brake," he said. "If you do we shall not get there."

It was a hair-raising experience. The car gathered momentum as it rolled on down the smooth macadam road. She did not put her foot upon the brake, for when he saw a tremor in her right knee indicating desire to cut down speed, he admonished her with one word. As one in a hypnotic spell she did as she was told. Her eyes opened wide, her cheeks flushed with a fever that was part excitement and part terror. No record was left upon her consciousness of fields or fences or fallow land upon either side of her. The only spot that photographed upon her retina was the bend at the bottom of the hill, rushing madly toward her with ever-increasing speed. Guarding the side of the road at this spot and, to her fevered mind, separating her from eternity, was a mere fence. A voice at her ear kept explaining that it was necessary to keep up their speed at this point or they would never reach the top of the rise beyond. Pride prompted her to keep her poise—for she had been trained from early youth that the first principle in life is to retain one's composure.

To the man beside her, with a pirate's blood in

his veins, this was an adventure. He gauged the distance nicely, perfectly certain that the turn could be made, and the car went around it as upon a steel track. They charged the next hill, carried impetuously on by their thundering momentum. Up the slope they moved, giving speed in exchange for distance. Their galloping pace became a trot, the trot a walk, the walk a mere crawl; and the wheels just turned over as they rolled toward the top and there saw, like Moses viewing the Promised Land, the valley beyond. The car hung poised upon the brow with the wheels turning so slowly that he could read the embossed letters upon their tires. He leaped out, putting his shoulder against the machine, and like a live thing, it moved and started again on its mad journey.

A man and woman, dangerously close together, strolled in the middle of the thoroughfare before them. But the occupants of the car were stopping neither for love, nor hate nor any of the petty things of life. They were spell-bound by the exhilaration of going down hill. And down hill they went with leaps and bounds, roaring over the wooden bridge at the foot and sliding out upon the smooth sunlit level below. Here life took on its ordinary proportions again. Instead of Mer-

cury and the cousin of Jupiter coasting down the clouds from Olympus, they became now merely two people riding in an automobile.

Very normally and in a prosaic manner they rolled along the road, stopping in an ordinary way before an ordinary store and requesting the ordinary five gallons of gasoline. And then, instead of stealing power from the hills, they pulled away under their own fuel, the engine purring contentedly and happily once more.

"I am going into town," she said. "I can give you a lift, if that is your destination."

That was not his destination at all. Still, he accepted her offer.

"You are an adventurous spirit," she asserted, in a well-bred, unemotional way, but with a touch of admiration.

"It's reflex."

"What do you mean?"

"I live the life of a hermit thrush most of the time. Once in a while I must get rid of excess energy."

He felt her curious glance upon him.

"Have you been long in Washington?"

"About a year."

"That means you are an old resident. Why have I never met you?"

"You have," he replied, laughing. "Just now."

She made an impatient gesture.

"The real reason," he went on, seriously, "is because I have been working. I have been learning the street railway business—a worm's eye view, so to speak—from the very bottom."

"Not as a—motorman?"

"Why, yes," he replied, amused, seeing that she was somewhat aghast at the idea. But her ear was quick to catch the note of banter.

"Spoofing," she accused. And with just a touch of hauteur that had nothing at all to do with displeasure, but was merely a part of her smooth composure, she selected, with a conjurer's lightness of touch, another subject of conversation and began to talk to him in an easy off-hand way. He could not but admire the machine-like perfection of her manner. No one could have said that she was not an ornamental creature, and her pleasant, light gossip kept him amused until they were almost downtown.

"Where shall I set you down?" she asked. He was disconcerted for a moment. He could not ask her to set him down at the moving picture theatre on E street or at Carrigan's Rapid Lunch,

which were the only places he frequented. Yet he must be going somewhere—it would have been too frank to admit that he was driving with her simply for the fun of continuing an adventure. So he mentioned the name of an exclusive club beyond whose portals he had never trod, but which was near the car line he would have to take to go to his work.

He alighted and thanked her, standing gracefully upon the curb, hoping that she would drive away before he had to go up the steps. But, as he had more than half suspected she would, she arranged affairs deftly so that she could see whether he really did enter the club. She nodded to him prettily, started the engine again, and, as if certain that he had disappeared from her horizon, leisurely drew on her gauntlet gloves. Seeing that there was no further function for him to perform standing upon the street curb, he faced about and hurried up the steps of the club. William Spade was quite equal to playing whatever game anyone else saw fit to start. The door opened automatically before him. His desire was to enter, have it close behind him and then inquire for someone—anyone at all. But he was saved that trouble. Footsteps approached behind him.

"Why, hello, Spade," called a familiar voice.

He turned about and saw his friend Barry. At the same time the girl's motor moved slowly away from the curb.

CHAPTER IV

OPPORTUNITY

"Rarefied society you drive with," was Barry's comment.

"Is it?"

"Don't you think so?"

"I—don't know the lady's name," William confessed.

The congressman glanced at him admiringly.

"Jove, you're a scream, Spade. Come on in."

William related the adventure that led up to his having to seek assistance at the door of the club. Barry listened with interest.

"The lady is named Barclay," he said, at length. "That may convey something to you. I think her first name is Sara. Her father is Joseph Barclay—a captain, or a major-general perhaps, of industry. His specialty is railroads. If you held out your two hands, I imagine he could hang a million dollars upon each finger for you, without missing it."

"I know the big white house facing the Circle—from the outside."

"From the outside." Barry laughed. "That brings me to something I have wanted to say to you. The job you have isn't much of a job—I'm sorry I got it for you. I find there are too many people at the top in this street railway business. At the end of about four years more, by a piece of luck, the superintendent of that branch of the line may be fired or resign, and you may, if your horoscope lies just right, be given the job of superintendent at a salary of a hundred and twenty-five dollars."

He drummed on the arm of his chair. "And you'll hold that for at least ten years more. In addition to that, it is one of those infected jobs."

"Infected?"

"Yes. Your friends receive you with open arms—just the same as they would if you had leprosy. That is the strange thing about our social code. We have queer criterions. A young man who works in a bank may go anywhere if he behaves himself and is fairly attractive. But a young man working in a jewelry store or in a garage may not. Yet those three positions are all similar—in that they render service, and in almost an equal degree, to the moneyed classes."

"But the job of the boy in the bank comes under the head of 'financial.' "

"Right. That's the solution. Banker, broker, stock manipulator, Wall Street—those are the magic words. The fonts of gold, you know. This is an age that requires money. But, to return to what I started out to say, you must give up your job. Get into something that looks right and meet people of the class you have been accustomed to meet."

"But that is not a profession."

"It is, if you keep your eyes open."

William pondered over this.

"You mean I should attempt to marry Miss Barclay, or one similar, and thus feather the nest?" he demanded, at length.

"Not necessarily. Although that would be desirable. You might confine your attention entirely to men—if you feel that is more congenial. A young man with your personal attractions makes friends; and friends mean opportunities. I suggest this line of thought to you. I believe you will do well to give it your earnest consideration."

"I shall do so."

"And you must remember this. You have no cash capital to work on. Your capital is a quick brain and a bright face. You must place it where it will do you most good. It will never help you there at the car-barn."

An incident that happened that evening at the barn served in a way to drive home this advice of his friend. As he entered his small office, McGowan, the superintendent, was improvising a reprimand for a couple of motormen who were using too much current in running their cars as registered by a device on their cars known as a coasting dial. It was supposed to be an index of how well the motorman in each case was conserving current and momentum.

"Spade," directed McGowan, "I wish you'd keep an eye on the men, and report everybody that drops below twenty-five percent."

"I'll do as you say, sir, but I don't like to report them for that sort of thing."

"What do you mean—you don't like to report them?"

William thought he had been in the service long enough to voice an opinion.

"It's none of my business, of course, but these dials are not a good test. If you take—"

"You had the right idea when you said it was none of your business," growled the superintendent. "If you have any kick on the coasting dials, I'll arrange it so you can make it to Mr. Baker in the morning."

This meant that he would be reported to the

traffic manager. McGowan was a hard-headed, two-fisted fellow, who ruled his piece of the work by brawn and let somebody else higher up furnish the brains. His low calibre and the low calibre of the other men he had to deal with, William had taken as a matter of course before. But, after his experiences of the afternoon with two people of his own mental level, he was suddenly overcome by a feeling of homesickness—the inevitable craving of a man long marooned on a desert isle, for his own people and his own places. For the first time in the two years he had been employed there, he experienced a feeling of disgust for his work.

In the morning, when he returned to the house where he slept, a smell of boiling cabbage greeted him at the door, or the ghost of the smell of cabbage boiled yesterday. It all depended upon whether the recurrence of cabbage was a daily or a tertiary event. He hurried up the dingy, narrow stairs. The red and blue stained glass in the bathroom door gave an unwholesome illumination to the hallway; as if in filtering out the pleasant rays of light it had filtered out also all the oxygen that should have been in the air. His room looked out upon a vista of back yards, wherein his neighbors had striven to outdo each other in untidiness.

For the first time the dreariness of these surroundings was impressed upon him. It was not dreary to the others who lived there. On the contrary, a joyous air of contentment reigned everywhere which made its deficiencies the more pronounced. In the yard adjoining a man sat in his shirt sleeves, red undershirt showing at the wrists, and tossed a ball to a grimy babe he would have admitted was his own—and seemed to enjoy it. In the room across the way a girl sang as she pressed her collar and cuffs preparatory to putting them on.

Their optimism was unpleasant to him. It was unpleasant also, when he wanted to be in the sunshine, to have to undress and go to bed. He had never succeeded in accommodating himself to his owl-like life. It seemed unwholesome and unhealthy. He had taken the greatest pains to be in the sunshine every available minute as if to keep alive the red corpuscles in his blood. He had a fear always that he would become pale and ænemic—like one of those creatures that live under a stone.

The next day he received orders—though not in so many words—to substitute for his morning nap a visit to Mr. Baker's office. The hour set was

nine in the morning. Since he had learned, however, that it was customary when a reprimand was to be issued to have the victim report about two hours before-hand and wait, in order to add to his humiliation, William took the precaution of calling Mr. Baker's office on the telephone to find out at what time that gentleman was expected to come down. Being informed of the hour, he slept from about half past seven until half past nine and appeared at Mr. Baker's office promptly at ten. So prompt, indeed, was he that he preceded Mr. Baker himself by but a few steps and was thus given the privilege of holding open the office door for him. For this courtesy the traffic manager thanked him pleasantly. At ten-thirty, when he was ushered into the private office, Mr. Baker recognized him.

"Er—a—Mr. Spade," he said, consulting a memorandum, "you were requested to appear here at nine o'clock."

"Yes, sir. But since I learned you were not to be here until ten, I did not hurry."

The glances of the two men held each other for a full minute. The traffic manager turned away, a faint smile lifting the corner of his mouth.

"Well, let that pass, Mr. Spade. I have more

important business with you. I understand you are interfering with the discipline of the barn."

"I took occasion to criticise the coasting-dials."

"Why?"

"Because I had noticed that the men with the high percentages would let their cars coast almost to a standstill, for the purpose of improving their record. And I am certain that the current required to overcome the inertia of the car in getting up speed again is greater than the current saved by the extra coasting."

Mr. Baker gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling. "Go on," he said.

William went on—to explain his observations of the results obtained in endeavoring to save money by substituting momentum for current, when possible. The other listened attentively.

"You develop a very nice theory," he said, at length. "But we don't run street railways by theory."

"The practical consideration is—do you save current?"

"Quite so."

"Then why not put a meter on one of the cars and really find out?"

The other looked at him sharply.

"I will take your suggestion under advisement," he said, finally.

As his visitor left he shook hands with him. For some time nothing was done about it. Then without warning one day they put a meter on one of the cars and conducted a series of experiments with various motormen—all of which seemed to prove the truth of William's contention, for although one man made a record of nearly eighty percent, the consumption of current was about the same as in the case of the man who made but twenty-five percent. As a result the company took off the dials, and William received a letter of commendation from Mr. Baker.

With this to his credit, it seemed now that there was an opportunity for him to escape from his present position and get a start on the upward way. He kept his ear upon the ground and waited for an opportunity. And when at length the master mechanic resigned, the foreman of the shops in consequence being made master mechanic, and the assistant foreman of shops being made foreman, William made application to Mr. Baker for the vacant position of assistant foreman. It was not a very important job—the pay was but one hundred dollars a month—and there was no

one in the shops with education enough to fill the place. He thought therefore that he stood a good chance. But Mr. Baker sent for him one day and said that the place had already been given to a friend of someone higher up.

"When do I get a chance, Mr. Baker?"

"You have to hit the bull's-eye many times, Mr. Spade, before they ring the bell. There is a generation of young men growing up now who are the sons of rich fathers. They are not expected to win their way upwards from the bottom by their own efforts as their fathers and their grandfathers did. They are put through the mill and passed upward from position to position to places of trust—and high salary. Young men such as you must stand aside when this procession is going by."

"Mr. Spade," he concluded, as William rose to go, "there is only one coin that counts in the hands of a young man winning his way. That's punch. You have to get the world down and poke it in the eye, and then it gives you what you want."

It was a gloomy and crestfallen William Spade that set foot upon the sidewalk outside the Company's office. He felt mentally as he had felt physically some years before in an interclass fight when he had fallen upon the ground and a mob of

eight or ten deep had settled upon him, making it impossible for him to move or, except occasionally, to breathe. He was down now, with no power to get up, and the weight upon him was suffocating him. He must pull himself up out of the stratum to a level where people breathed. There were persons who were contented at the level in which he lay, perhaps, because they had risen from a still lower one. He himself had been contented there when he felt he was generating power to lift himself out of it. But now when he saw that he had stored up no power, but was a mere mole, smothering underground and waiting to be stepped upon, he resented the location that had been assigned him. He must get up into the light and air at any cost.

Of course this state of mind was due to the germ that had long ago been introduced into his system. His contact with riches and ease had made poverty nauseating to him. His system demanded luxury and money-spending. He had been inoculated with the desire for luxury and opulence and his cumulative discontent with the lack of it was now breaking through.

At this hour of the day it was high time to go back to the nest which was his home and lay himself down to sleep. But dark nests had no attrac-

tions for him. He preferred to be in a place where people walked in the sunlight. This was not hard to find. About him were beautiful women in dresses of all hues, strangely tight around the bottom as was the fashion that year,—in which, eagerly crippling themselves, they moved slowly along with much expenditure of effort, and were greatly pleased. It was strange that a woman who could take a nice, thirty-two inch step would voluntarily put on a type of garment that would make her take two steps to traverse the same distance—but they did it with joy. For no female would permit herself to be comfortable if by so doing she wore other attire than that prescribed for that particular season of that particular year.

An automobile, of a design strangely familiar, hurried along on his side of the street. Suddenly, in response to a quick tightening of the brakes, it cut down its speed and, with a perilous double turn, swung smoothly into a vacant parking space by the curb. He found himself abreast of its wind-shield and close to it. The girl within leaned back comfortably against the cushions.

"Well, Mr. Spade," she said.

He stopped in surprise, and met a pair of handsome eyes—which belonged to his lady of the

stranded automobile. Small wonder the car had been familiar.

"Good morning, Miss Barclay," he replied.

She raised her eyebrows as he pronounced her name, but made no comment upon his knowledge of it.

"You were in such a brown study, I could not resist interrupting it," she observed.

"I was speculating on the propensity they all have for hobbling themselves up."

"We all do it. I myself am a perfect cripple, like a Chinese woman. I have positively given up walking. But why do you philosophize thus? Are you going to write a book to prove that we are a nation of wasters and slaves to fashion?"

"Would you?"

"No. If I were you I should get in this automobile instead and help me buy a hat. It would show that you rather approved of extravagance."

In his present mood, this fitted in well with his desires. They drove to a luxurious sort of shop, where a carriage-man opened the door of the machine for them, saluting her by name. A boy opened the door of the shop, and they entered into a spider's parlor laid with a rug whose sheen was unmistakable, and set about with deep luxurious chairs. A high wainscot of dark oak, a rich-hued

rep wall covering above, a few pictures chosen with much skill, heavy hangings—this was the setting. A woman entered and greeted them with an expert blending of friendliness and deference—all as though there was no business to be transacted and the girl was simply honoring them with a call. An assistant presently brought out hats, which were tried on one after another. In fact, for a while, William was of the opinion that the expedition was merely for the purpose of seeing how well those lovely creations looked in conjunction with her glorious complexion and high color.

"Don't you think this is darling?" was her frequent ecstatic question.

"Darling is the word," he would reply, thinking of the ensemble rather than merely the hat.

Or "I am sure this is *positively* the best."

"Positively," was his opinion.

"You are nothing but an echo," she objected.

"You wouldn't value my real opinion on this subject."

"On the contrary, I should swear by it."

"Really?"

"Of course."

He leaned back luxuriously into the depths of his chair and glanced at the waiting assistant.

"Will you get that gwendolyn-colored hat with

the rose in it? The rose matches the lady's complexion. Don't forget, Miss Barclay, which complexion you—yes, that's the hat. Glorious!" He stood up and viewed it from the other side. "That will do very nicely," he said, to the amused proprietor. "You may send it."

The girl gasped, but good sportsmanship was part of her training and code.

"You need not send it," she remarked. "I'll wear it."

Whereupon she put the rose-decked creation upon her head and secured it with the necessary pins. The color in her cheeks was a trifle deeper now than the roses, the excitement of surrendering, if but briefly, to his will having moved her blood on a little more quickly. They left the shop and she took him back to about the spot where she had picked him up.

"I am due home in a few minutes. Shall I set you down at your club?" she asked, demurely.

He named a less difficult place this time. As he watched the car move away, he realized that she was symbolic of something—that she lived above the surface of the ground. But he also realized that to live where she lived required strength and the exercise of power.

Both of these things, however, he proposed to

attain. And if he was to attain them and make a place for himself wherein he would receive whatever advancement he had rightfully earned, he must set about it very soon. It was no small problem to decide. His bed and he were not acquainted that day. But when nightfall came he had made up his mind. And, with his reports to the main office the following morning, went also a letter saying that as soon as the Company could get the services of a new night clerk, he wished to resign.

CHAPTER V

MISS BARCLAY BLUSHES

Some ten months later an old gentleman carefully turned the knob of the door upon which was inscribed "William Spade. Life Insurance," and entered the office. The young man at the desk sprang to his feet.

"Well, father, how are you?"

"First rate, I thank you." He turned back to look at the name on the door. "Son, it's a comfort, isn't it, to have your name printed on something. I used to have my name on the glass of my office door and, although most of the time you couldn't read it for dust, it showed I was a person people wanted to see. But now you can't find my name anywhere."

"Son," he went on, brushing the thin hair back from his forehead, "you saw me when I was in my prime—when I was the chief owner of a business that was the envy of all my friends. You saw that taken out of my hands by a very unfair piece of dealing. I want you to profit by my mistake.

That is the only consolation I can get out of the failure I have made of my life."

The elder Spade had aged greatly. To his son, it seemed but a short while since the father, laughing, light-hearted, a young man almost, had held a small boy in his arms before the fire and recited poetry to him, until, still listening to its cadences, the tired child had fallen sound asleep. William could still remember the voice declaiming:

"The hand of Douglas is his own
And never shall in friendly grasp
The hand of such as Marmion clasp."

These stirring, heroic words, breathing war and defiance, the gentle-spirited, peace-loving man, by strange antithesis, never tired of hearing.

"Well," asked Mr. Spade, at length, "how are you getting on?"

"Nicely. I am going to move into a bigger office. A smaller one would be quite adequate, you understand, but I have to live up to a modern business axiom, which is to keep improvements and expansion always ahead of business. As soon as a man starts out he takes an office twice as big as he needs, puts a valuable rug on the floor and installs every possible known piece of mahogany

office furniture, twice as expensive as he can afford; and waits for business to catch up to him."

"It seems to me that such squandering could only lead to failure."

"It's the bluff that counts. A man who has an office in a building where there is no elevator might just as well not be in any business. The more marble there is in the lobby of an office-building the more people go in and out through it. Business men today love to be dazzled. They give their business to the man who keeps them waiting longest in his outer office."

"But all that is not sincere."

"We do not strive for sincerity any more," responded William, cheerily.

He moved into a larger and more comfortable office suite the following week. As he had forecast to his father, he put valuable rugs on the floors. He purchased the plainest and most expensive desks, filing cases and office equipment. He selected comfortable chairs such as appear in the lounging rooms of clubs. The whole had an adroit air of ease and prosperity. On the door in black letters was this simple announcement—"William Spade."

In the ten months that had elapsed since his resignation from the railway company, he had

slowly and carefully been accumulating acquaintances. He looked up members of his fraternity. He unearthed football men and acquaintances of his school days. To these he made himself agreeable in his off-hand way. They introduced him to others. He played squash-ball and tennis with them. He went to their clubs with them. He was always ready for an adventure. If there is such a thing as a man-about-town, he became one.

He had had himself put up for two good clubs and had been taken in to one of them. He had met a great many poor young men, but he had also met many rich ones—and a myriad of that class who had great expectations. It was to this latter class of men, at length, that he devoted his attention. He knew scores of them whose mothers held large sums of money in trust for them. There were others who were heirs to estates in dispute, from which they were bound to receive money as soon as the right amount was decided upon. Most of them, meanwhile, were marking time—waiting the pleasure of the gods. Not a very admirable attitude. But the certainty of plenty at some time in the future had an enervating effect upon them. Some of them would have gone into business immediately if they had had the money right away instead of having to wait for it.

Others would simply have begun to spend it at an earlier date. But they were unanimous in one thing—they all wanted the money.

William soon accumulated a strong following among them, because it began to appear that he would be able to be of assistance to them. He was working upon a scheme by which the life tenant, or the trustee, or whoever it was that held the money the heirs waited for, might still continue to hold it and the heirs possess it too. Such an arrangement seemed in the nature of a miracle to these hungry pups who were sitting upon their haunches waiting patiently for the food at last to be dropped to them—and to William too it seemed that it would be a miracle if he could so arrange the details that the scheme would actually work.

It was a broader field for him than his life insurance—and more than that it had the appearance of being a broader field. He had become strongly convinced of late, of the doctrine of appearances. Nothing succeeded, evidently, like the appearance of success. If such were the trend of the generation, he would do well to fall in with it. He did fall in with it, with a vague realization that it was an unsound basis to work upon. But his contact with riches had made him desire richness, and his later contact with poverty had made

him abhor drabness. His office and his life, hereafter, were to be civilized—and by civilization he understood the civilization of the rich.

And so, having run up a very big bill for office furniture and mortgaged his future to pay the large rent of his offices, he now, after having struggled under this expense for nearly a year, proved his confidence in himself by writing an advertisement for a competent and therefore an expensive stenographer. Having attended to this, he felt that he had now started his business upon a firm foundation.

One Sunday afternoon, about this time, he put on his most becoming clothes and made a call. He had not long before accidentally met upon the street, a sister of one of his college friends. Her husband had been appointed an Assistant Attorney-General and they had taken a house in Washington. She insisted that he must call upon her very soon, and he was taking advantage of the first available Sunday afternoon.

He was rather surprised at the scale on which they lived. But he reflected that, having an ample income in addition to the honorarium the government allows assistant cabinet officers, it would be a temptation to them to spread out and receive the adulation their official position carried with it.

The house had a wide, white, marble front, with a hedge and some trim pine trees bordering the piece of parking before it. Several automobiles stood at the curb. The grilled door, whose handsome iron pattern stood out sumptuously against the red silk curtain behind it, was opened by a man in smart livery.

"Mrs. Carver?" William asked, wondering if he were calling at the right house.

The man bowed, and took his hat and gloves. He said that he would find Mrs. Carver in the library. As this appeared to be upstairs, William ascended a curving marble stair, at the top of which a murmur of conversation directed him to a room at his right. Mrs. Carver rose to greet him.

"So glad you came," she said, but was too busy then to add more than a few sentences to this greeting. She presented him to a girl whose name he never discovered, for she slurred it so adroitly that he could not tell whether the cooing sound she had made was really a name or just a courteous symbol, in place of a name she had forgotten. The girl consisted of an attractive dress and hat with something animate within that conversed.

He looked appraisingly over the company in the room. An air of forced gayety hung over them. A year later he would have known that half of

them were head-hunters, who came for the purpose of telling upon the following afternoon the manner in which they had occupied themselves upon this afternoon, thus, by reason of the Carvers' official position, absorbing credit.

He and his companion were presently joined by another girl, dragging spoils in the shape of two young men—social butterflies fresh from the cocoon. They were abnormally blasè. Not more than twenty years old, they had adopted the pose that the world had offered all its store of entertainment and failed to interest them. William could not but think of the waste it was that these young, impressionable human beings, endowed with brains and precious feelings, should purposely view the world through dark glasses, depriving all the best things of their flavor and all the beautiful things of their loveliness, in order that they might sustain a pose of complete sophistication. In place of the simple, natural joy of living, they strove always for complex means of enjoyment, simply for the effect of not appearing to be entertained by the things which entertain the ordinary individual.

They all flitted away from him presently, and in their place soon came smiling Mrs. Carver—who noted his air of abstraction.

"What is the bad news?" she asked. "Let me enjoy it."

"I was just meditating upon a waste of perfectly good sensibilities and brains. There go two boys just turned twenty to whom the world has nothing left to show."

"You don't blame them, do you? They are brought up to be interested only in the things that it is proper to be interested in. All other things to them are common or impossible—or just drab. That is their great fear in life—of being drab."

Mrs. Carver viewed the two young men reflectively. "If I had children they would be just like that. My husband has had brains enough to make money—our children, if we had any, would have to be trained to spend it properly. Their vision would be narrowed down just as is the vision of those two boys. They would be set in a class whose objective is the buying of pleasure. As members of it they would have to learn to enjoy themselves in a manner that would reflect distinction upon them—to know at what combination of circumstances to be bored and at what to appear diverted. They would make a serious business of pleasure and the disbursing of money. A high objective, isn't it?"

William assented. It occurred to him that it

was in order not to lose his foothold on this very sort of life that he was making his supreme effort. For the moment he could not help thinking that it was an empty ambition.

"But, as you think, without saying," Mrs. Carver went on, quickly, "why do we stay in this atmosphere? It is only because we are carried on by our own inertia. If we strike out to swim, the current carries us on just the same. The conduct of our special world is determined by the halcyon age in which we live, which gives us money and leisure. If one finds himself mentally and financially equipped for such a class, he must either accept it as it is, or else find himself human society in a class lower in the scale—which could not be satisfactory."

He was about to reply when someone entered the room. His hostess moved a step from him to greet her. William stood where he was, a light of unusual interest in his eyes as he viewed the newcomer. Mrs. Carver turned to him.

"I want to present you to Miss Barclay," she said.

He bowed and let his eyes rest upon hers. Hers were bright, and a flush was mounting her cheeks which was not the flush of embarrassment—an emotion she knew not.

"How do you do, Mr. Spade," she murmured—smiled, and in a moment had slipped away.

Mrs. Carver eyed her narrowly. "Now why did she blush?" she asked.

"Did she?" responded William.

CHAPTER VI

A DIVERTING GAME

William's scheme to permit the impecunious heir to come into possession of his inheritance while the life tenant still continued to hold it, progressed steadily. At length he called in a young lawyer named Warburton, in whose ability he had great confidence, and turned the whole scheme over to him to make water-tight; and Warburton, going over it inch by inch, soldered up the leaks, and gave it as his opinion that the scheme would work.

The problem was: to enable a man who, for instance, would inherit one hundred thousand dollars upon the death of his mother, to obtain that money immediately. No bank would lend him a hundred thousand dollars upon such a prospect, because he might die and never inherit the money, in which case the bank would lose. The bank must be secured against such a contingency, and the solution of that was so simple as to be staggering. It was only necessary to insure the life of

the heir for one hundred thousand dollars and make it payable to the bank in case he died before inheriting the money. The bank could not lose.

The bank would insist, of course, that the interest be guaranteed as well. This was to be accomplished by the heir buying an annuity for his mother equal to the amount of the interest; and making it payable to the bank. That made the whole transaction absolutely iron-clad. And the beauty of it from William Spade's standpoint was this. He would receive: first, a commission for writing a hundred-thousand-dollar life insurance policy—a large stroke of business in itself; second, a commission for writing a six-thousand-dollar annuity, which was a large annuity; and third, a two-percent commission for obtaining a hundred thousand dollar loan, which was a large loan.

The fact that it was possible to manipulate affairs in this manner so that two people could have possession of the same dollar at the same time, seemed to William to be a commentary upon the financial possibilities that existed in his country. It seemed to prove the power and plenty of the nation's money, and its eagerness to take advantage of every scheme, however unorthodox, that promised a safe return of money.

The spring of that year found the country more

free than ever with money and strong in its reliance upon its prosperity. It was a wave of unusual success that rose above the level of past steady successes—that gave promise of greater opportunities and even wider fields.

William Spade was able to furnish ten starveling heirs with their inheritances, by putting into practice the method he had worked out. The money involved in these cases amounted in all to more than five hundred thousand dollars and, in consequence, the horn of plenty dropped into his lap a large sum of money. He had many debts to pay. There were lawyer's fees and other expenses. But even deducting these, he felt happy in the net profit that he was able to deposit at his bank.

It was not always a charitable act that he did in obtaining money for these youths. He failed to realize that the power he had in his hands was one which needed to be used with discretion. He was like a physician having in his possession a potent drug, which was capable of great good or, if not used with discretion, of lasting harm. Some of the young men, perhaps it would be better to say, most of them, were too inexperienced to be trusted with as much money as he obtained for them. The signs were plain that they had no

thought but to spend it as fast as they could. William knew this, but felt no duty to interest himself in it. He did not believe that probing into the results of his business acts was his responsibility.

He had had many difficulties in obtaining a competent stenographer to care for his office. In the course of two months he had had four or five. What he wanted was a woman who could take care of his office tactfully and efficiently during his absence, who could keep his books for him accurately, and who would take an interest in her work—in a word, as a snip of a thing informed him upon being discharged from the place, who could run the business just a little bit better than he could run it himself.

One day a young woman came into his office and said that she understood he wanted a stenographer, and, if such were the case, she would like to apply for the position. He glanced at her clothes and then at her face, and thereupon rose ceremoniously from his desk.

"I believe there is a God," he asserted.

"What?"

"You suit me in every detail."

"You know absolutely nothing about me," she exclaimed, beginning to laugh. When she

laughed, an atom of memory stirred in his brain and strove tantalizingly to bring up an elusive picture of something.

"I know this about you," he said, "that your clothes are restful to the eye and you look as though you had convolutions upon the inside of your head instead of merely marcelled upon the outside."

She smiled. He studied the alert, mobile face.

"Have you ever met me before?" he asked, presently, the elusive memory still disturbing him. But her reply gave him no assistance.

"If I had," she said, "you wouldn't admit forgetting it, would you?"

He asked her what remuneration she would expect and she in turn asked what her duties and hours would be.

"What makes you think you have met me?" she inquired, when these preliminaries had been arranged.

"I have a tantalizing memory of you in some far-off past, some previous existence, maybe. It is the way you laugh—drawing in your under lip."

"I have always done that—in this existence. I do not know about previous ones."

"Some day it may all come to me. Perhaps

when Gabriel blows his last trumpet and all secrets are revealed—"

"We needn't wait that long," she said, unexpectedly. "I will tell you now. My name is Ruth Dunbar."

The atom of memory in his brain released its picture. A big, overpowering ocean, a small boy wandering disconsolately among the sand dunes, trying to discover something there that seemed familiar and homelike, and then coming out of the sea itself, apparently, a nymph of a water-sprite, running along in the surf, splashing spray over her brown limbs as she ran. That was the picture. He strode eagerly across the room.

"I'll never forgive you for not saying it the instant you opened the door," he exclaimed.

"I was not certain it was you at first."

"Do you remember," he began, eagerly, "the disturbance that was raised the time I—" He paused, suddenly embarrassed.

"Perfectly," she said, laughing. "I even remember the color of the paint."

Her appearance settled the last remaining difficulty that was disturbing him, and his craft at last seemed to be sailing serenely over smooth waters. He felt once more like the boy he had been at college—care-free, light-hearted and with

no responsibilities upon him. It had been many a day since he had been in this mood.

Mrs. Carver noticed it that evening. She had invited him to a dinner, and, since it was the first time William had been to a social function of any sort for a long time, he was, in his buoyant mood, as excited as a boy.

"You look tonight, somehow, just as you used to look when I knew you in your college days," she said.

"I feel like it. I have no troubles."

"Fortunate! Because I am going to sit you by the most attractive girl in Washington."

He caught a glimpse then of Sara Barclay coming up the stairs, the light from a red-shaded lamp on the landing falling across her round, bare shoulders.

"If she beats the one I am looking at," he said, "she has broken a record."

"She doesn't have to beat her," his hostess observed. "That is the girl."

At the table his spirits rose. It was exciting to him—the babel of talk, the laughter, the lights, the servants moving softly about, the girls in their best dresses, the hand that rested on the cloth beside him, and, at last, the voice which said:

"Is this your glass of water or is it mine?

That is the only way I can attract your attention."

"Take it. It's yours. You may have everything you ask."

"What were you thinking? The girl on the other side of you has been waiting anxiously for five minutes for you to come to, so she could try her charms upon you. But I had to have you first."

"I was entertained by the joyous mood of the people here," he said. "It is so studied and perfect that when it is sprung upon you suddenly it is overpowering, like the first taste of ambrosia."

"Is it studied?"

"There are sixteen persons at this table. Do you see one of them that does not seem to be all vivacity and sunshine?"

She glanced about her, covertly, so that her neighbor upon the other side might not take the opportunity of conversationally snatching her away.

"No."

" That's the result of study—you call it breeding. These same sixteen persons at the next sixteen dinners will be just as uniformly gay—no matter how they feel. Therefore I say it is studied."

She nodded. But her plan of campaign was aimed at something more personal.

"And your present *vis-a-vis*—is she happy at this moment, just as the result of study?" She turned a mischievously contemplative face toward him.

It was necessary to be wary in answering this. "Since I," he said, "might be considered as a partial cause for any such effect—I should like to have your opinion upon the subject."

"Oh, would you?"

"While I do not doubt my ability to make any girl happy—"

"Temporarily, if I understand you?"

"Temporarily, as you say. Still I like to have the fact pleasantly confirmed. If you could give me a hint—"

"What sort of hint?"

"You might," he suggested, seriously, "say, 'You have made this evening one that will always stay green in my memory.' Some such simple thing."

She laughed aloud at his impudence. "You are delightful," she exclaimed, as though he were some new type of person entirely new to her.

She shot at him an arch glance which rested upon him but for an instant. It was like a caress,

which he still seemed to feel, as he glanced now at the curve of her shoulder turned quickly from him, to make amends to her partner beyond. But in the smallest lifting of those shoulders as she turned, she contrived to convey an alluring message of regret. He stared at her for a moment, half-wondering, half-admiring, but quite conscious that she had thrown her glove into the ring. And when she rose to go, she left as a guerdon for him to wear in his helmet the simple yet provoking word "Hurry!"

He was conscious that a man presently moved up to the seat beside him, and something familiar about the face gave him the impression that it must be one of the boys he had characterized a few days before as being sated with the world. The boy smoked a cigar, blowing out smoke rings, as indicative of thought, and seemed to be talking. William, enveloped in a comfortable glow of content and at peace with the world, watched the men about the table idly, aware of the voice beside him as of some distant music; and answering now and then "Yes" or "No" as one inserts a new needle in anticipation of another record.

"I am glad you feel that way about it too," drawled the voice; "at first I used to think an invitation there was a command—like a royal sum-

mons, y'know, bidding you appear in the presence of the best and bravest. But now, d'yuh me, I seldom go. Of course, it's stirring to meet the President of the broad United States and so on and so on. But, what with politicians' daughters and a slice of hoi polloi everywhere you look, it's too deadly for me. Don't you think so, too?" he demanded.

William eyed the infant with general contempt.

"If I thought so, I shouldn't say it," he responded cheerfully.

Through this talk he was studying absently and with a certain grudging appreciation the ascetic features of his host. Carver was gravely conversing with a small circle about him, emphasizing his words by baton-like movements of his thin forefinger—a man famous for his singleness of purpose and his belief in the seriousness of life, who stood out strongly against this light-hearted company. But William felt that he took life and its responsibilities too seriously.

In the distance he heard laughter and voices and the assembling of guests. They rose presently and moved toward the alluring sounds. William Spade was twenty that night—as young and ready for what joy the night had to offer as the boy at his elbow should have been. A new actor upon

the scene, he felt curious eyes upon him. Many a bright smile warned him of Alexander, willing to find new lands to conquer, in response to which he strove to invite the iron heel of any beautiful woman who wished to place it. He followed urbanely into what dens of danger he was led and enjoyed himself thoroughly.

"The game law is off tonight," said Sara Barclay, as he paused before her. "You are fair prey for them all."

She put her hand upon his shoulder and moved easily off with him, dancing not as if it were a mechanical process, but as if rather she floated along like a dryad of a wood-nymph lighter than air. He told her of this.

"You should see me as a real wood-nymph," she replied.

"Are you a real wood-nymph in private life?"

"Not so much in private as formerly—since people are getting more used to the idea. I am doing rhythmic dancing—as everyone is nowadays. And as is well known, we wear shockingly few clothes."

She made the statement calmly and frankly, as she would have mentioned the ring on her finger, but quite well knowing that it would excite more interest. In common with her kind, she used the

axiom that it is ill-bred to be prudish as an excuse for making, when she chose, a daring point just within the rules. Half embarrassed, and curbing the line his imagination would have followed, William made it a point innocently to follow her lead.

"Do you find you have more freedom?" he asked, suavely.

"As free as a South-Sea islander. You feel quite stuffy afterwards in mere clothes."

She contrived to give to the snatch of conversation the air of inviting him closer into her confidence—as though she were singling him out from the rest. And, although he regarded all these signs as merely the familiar and yet ever new points of an all-absorbing game, he was not so adamant that it made no impression upon him.

After supper when people were beginning to leave, Sara Barclay said, "This is my last dance. If you are leaving now, there is room in our motor —in fact," she said, smiling, "plenty of room, since I came alone."

He drove home with her and she directed the chauffeur to take him on to his apartment. He stood still upon the steps watching the red light of the car as, having left him, it rolled swiftly away. It was not unpleasant to have someone look after

his comfort thus. It was not unpleasant to play a game when beauty and fascination and money happened to be united all in one as stakes—in event that one decided to play for stakes. And whatever one played for, it was a diverting game. There was no necessity for a man to curb his hand or to do anything but wait to see what happened.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW RELIGION

It is to be supposed that eligible young men are scarce everywhere, but in Washington, where residence is given as a reward for age and wisdom, they appear to be doubly scarce. On that account, perhaps, William found himself receiving many invitations. He had set himself up in an expensive bachelor apartment, which, no doubt, did much toward stimulating the imagination of many a person bidding him to this or that affair. He found he could dine out some three or four evenings a week, which was interesting and diverting, as he was meeting new people always and making new friends.

But when he discovered there were some maniacs who actually kept score of their dinner invitations and could tell you—or rather insisted upon telling you on the slightest provocation—exactly how many times they had dined out during the season, he felt that his self-respect made it necessary to refuse many requests for his presence.

One limited intelligence informed him blandly, "Theoretically, I dine at the Such-and-Such Club, but my friends have not given me a chance to do so for a month." He found that it was considered very good economics by a number of free lances not to have any regular refectory but to depend upon friends. The friends, therefore, soon got to know who would fill in at the eleventh hour. This was not William's idea of having a social success.

As May drew to a close, the usual exodus from the city began. Dinners and dances became less frequent. Sara's father, the only other member of her immediate family (her mother having died several years before) at length decided that the tropical climate of Washington was too difficult for him and followed the throng, taking Sara with him.

During the months that followed, sometimes she wrote to him, and he read those letters carefully. He actually allowed himself to ponder her suitability. For whatever his success or failure in life, it was such an ornamental person as she that he would need. It was people of her class with whom he must live.

He did not give consideration to the purposelessness of that life. Sometimes in the afternoon

at calling time, he would see women of the upper stratum, gowned in expensive clothes and driving in expensive motors, manned by expensive beings in livery, making their round of calls at the houses upon the fashionable streets upon people they did not want to see, who had no human significance to them but were simply holders of certain places of wealth or influence. And, knowing that they realized they were making all this outlay of effort and money merely to obtain something which annoyed them, the pathos and fruitlessness of the life might have been impressed upon him. But he avoided that phase of it. As Mrs. Carver had said, that was the only society of cultivated people there was. Whatever idiosyncrasies and weaknesses they had, unelevating though they might be, he had to accept them as part of the bargain. In fact that seemed to be the attitude of everyone who was permitted to stand on that high plane—they admitted the absurdity and emptiness of the code, but they needed to breathe that atmosphere.

If that were the strata in which William Spade was to live, he must have a wife used to its forms and graces. No one could fit this specification more fully than Sara Barclay. Should he marry her, it would, he explained to himself, be because of these attributes and not because of her money.

Viewed in this light, the arrangement was a suitable and permissible one.

A hot, uninteresting summer dragged on, until one morning, toward the end of July, the newspapers published mildly the news that the crown prince of Austria had been assassinated in Belgrade—an announcement causing little comment and arousing small interest. But within an incredibly short time, as a result of it, the world was benumbed by the spectacle of all Europe embroiled. And having exempted Europe, when one said the world, it meant most of all the United States. And benumbed the country was—stunned, frightened, awed.

The closing of the New York Stock Exchange —its pulse and heart—left it dazed and gasping for breath. Its commerce and trade were the mainstays of its existence, and the mazes and intricacies of these two were so strange and complicated that in this great crisis it feared to touch the engine of its own upbuilding. Let the machine lie idle. The Stock Exchange was closed. What did it matter if business at large had nothing to do with stocks and bonds. Something was the matter with Money, and Money was the guiding star of the nation's life.

The nations that made money and the spending

of money their guiding star old Professor MacMillan had characterized as being on the downgrade. At one time it had seemed important to William to discover whether his own nation was aspiring and progressing toward the apex; or, having reached the apex, was all-powerful; or, having passed it, was retrograding—sliding again towards the abyss. He had brushed all that aside now. He was too busy striding towards wealth and power. Yet here was a manifestation that might have thrown light upon the question as to whether the nation was moving forward or backward. But he failed to note how deeply the country was in the grasp of the thirst for money.

He awoke one morning to find the world chloroformed. He tried to get a loan from a bank of five thousand dollars for one of his clients—a matter which ordinarily possessed about the same importance as the purchase of a postage stamp. But the bank officials drew long faces and said that it was not possible. Five thousand dollars! Two weeks before he had obtained a hundred thousand without question! Every other source was frozen up equally tight. Business was reduced to the mere process of barter and exchange —so much for so much—just as at the time of the landing of the Pilgrims.

William's business was extinguished—quite as though some one had clamped a snuffer tight upon it. Bankers laughed when he entered their counting-rooms. The purse-bearers held up empty hands. Whatever office he entered, his call took on a mere social aspect. It seemed suddenly as if all money had disappeared.

"Miss Ruth," he said, entering his office and throwing himself disconsolately into his chair, "the world has gone wrong. Nobody has any money."

"Money," she replied. "You have already made enough money this year to last to the end of it."

"And spent it."

She stood by the window and looked down upon the sun-scorched street.

"A man like you," she answered, "who digs his spoon into the cauldron of business, and brings it out full, builds up a religion of which he is the center and the all-powerful god. And when some force, beside which he is a mere pigmy, is let loose in the regular course of events, he feels he is ill-used."

She was aware that his early careful training had left no impression upon him—that his contact with the spenders, the people who tried to

make life easy, had eliminated from his make-up the idea of responsibility to a God.

"But you do not realize," she went on, "that you are a pigmy. To you God is a legend. You are your own god. It is years since you have said prayers."

"Why should I say prayers? I admit the existence of a Creator of all things and of the rules by which they are run, but I am put on the earth to be self-reliant, to order my own life, to take care of myself. If I can't do it with the power I am given, am I to try to get the bulge upon everyone else by calling on Heaven to help me? I wish you would answer that."

He set about presently to prove that he could take care of himself. While the world lay dormant, his alert eye scanned the horizon for provender. He found the opportunity of buying for a small sum five acres of low-lying, unfruitful land in Prince George County, bordering a stream. It seemed like the height of folly to everyone who heard of it. But without vouchsafing any explanation, he had a plan drawn dividing it into lots and streets and, filing this with the county surveyor, had it drawn upon the official plat-book. This piece of apparent recklessness he performed upon the knowledge, gleaned

as a result of the deft placing of two twenty-dollar bills in the hands of just the proper person, that this was the only available site for a bridge in event of the construction of a certain new trolley line. He had an idea that the company, which was rich and whose business was not affected by the war, would attempt to buy the right of way while land was cheap.

The possibility that it might not be just fair for him to act upon information gained in this manner occurred to him. But it was imperative that he have money, and it was not for him, a single individual, to safeguard the interests of a powerful corporation to the detriment of his own. He felt, therefore, no hesitation in using the information for his own purposes.

Another stroke of business he felt was even more adventurous. He discovered one day that Sara Barclay's father, stirred up not a little by the war, had returned for a short while to Washington and had had an interview with the President, which had been made much of by the newspapers. William determined upon the bold expedient of making use of Mr. Barclay's presence. He had been besieged for a long while by a young man who was to inherit, upon the death of an aunt, two hundred thousand dollars, and who

wanted the money immediately. There was no way to get the money—unless Mr. Barclay would furnish it. After several efforts, William made an appointment with him at the club where he was staying. He found the financier sitting at a table smoking a large cigar. He was a short, thick-set man with a terrifyingly solemn and disapproving face. Glancing at this forbidding exterior, William was rather sorry he had come.

"Ha, Spade! Sit down," he said, with no evidence of a smile. "Come to sell me a railroad?"

Conscious of the smallness of his mission, William was genuinely embarrassed. However, there was no graceful means of retreat.

"Mr. Barclay," he said, "I came here for the purpose of asking you to invest two hundred thousand dollars—"

"Why, Spade," interrupted the financier, "there are people who think just now that there isn't that much money in the world."

William forgot his embarrassment for a moment. "I know," he said, earnestly, "everybody thinks the bottom has dropped out of things—and dropped out permanently. They think as long as the war lasts, this nation will be a corpse."

"Don't you?" was the cold comment.

William trod cautiously. "No," he replied, slowly. "I think if you dam up the energy and wealth and power of the country six months more, it will burst loose with an avalanche that will show everyone how really rich and resourceful we are."

Mr. Barclay rose. William, feeling that he had been too brash and outspoken, rose also. Who was he to be explaining the financial situation to one of the leading financial minds of the day? To his surprise, however, he discovered a miracle taking place. A smile—a wry, reluctant smile, but still a smile—relieved for a moment the tenseness of the other's face.

"Spade, you're an optimist." The rich man glanced at his watch. "It will be necessary," he said, "for me to lunch now,"—William took his hat from the table—"and," unexpectedly, "I should like to have you lunch with me. I need to hear more sunshine talk."

William was overwhelmed. But he knew, from Sara's scraps of conversation concerning her father, that the financier, himself a silent man, liked to have people about him who would talk to him, and that he would take much trouble, if he found a man who for one reason or another promised to be congenial company, to cultivate his ac-

quaintance. Accepting the invitation with some trepidation, he set about, as best he knew, to make himself entertaining. He put out of his mind, as far as he could, the fact that he was talking to an expert, and permitted himself to be drawn out as to his ideas upon the business situation and as to what fair weather lay beyond the banks of clouds which obstructed the horizon at the moment.

"My idea is," he said, in the course of this conversation, wondering what his companion was thinking, behind his sphynx-like quiet, "my idea is that there is one quality in the average American that is going to keep him, individually and collectively, from being bottled-up by this war situation. And that is his adaptability—he doesn't permit himself to be stumped by any new combination of circumstances."

Mr. Barclay said—"Just what do you mean?"

In explanation William told the story of the American lumber merchant who had supplied the English market for years with what he called hazel-wood, until at length the Englishman found out that there was no such wood. The American in the beginning had received an order for the wood and, instead of explaining that his customers were misinformed, he had looked over his stock

and supplied them with red gum, which was new to them and satisfied them as long as they thought it was what they had ordered.

The financier smiled his wry smile. "I see your point. Typical transaction. Doubly so because the man allowed himself an aberration of several degrees from the straight track—and called it good business."

William felt the cold eyes upon him as if seeking his opinion upon that phase of it.

"Of course," he replied, evenly, "every man is capable of deciding those questions as they arise. Not long ago someone told me the American business man was his own religion and his own god."

"The statement contains a certain amount of truth," agreed the other, cautiously. "His self-reliance is so complete, he feels the need of no Guiding Hand. I sometimes think," he added, seriously, "it's a mistake. I am not sure that a nation can continue to be successful and powerful unless it have a sincere belief in a God. That is a fact, Mr. Spade, always to keep before you."

But William, a little stirred up by the excitement of personal contact with the great man, allowed this particular admonition to pass by him unnoted. He considered it as merely a piece

of incidental moralizing. Whereas, the great financier, advanced in years and emerging from the heat of battle, had now clearness of vision to see and to view with no lack of concern the careless agnosticism of the men who struggled beside him for the money which was their real religion.

As William was about to take leave of him, having decided that it would be poor diplomacy to bring up again the question of the loan, his host surprised him by asking abruptly if the two hundred thousand dollars was intended for a loan upon a prospective inheritance. William replied that it was.

"Fix up the papers then," he said, laconically. "I can find the money for you."

William left the club, walking on air. At the door a reporter accosted him.

"You have been lunching with Mr. Barclay," he asserted. "What is his opinion as—"

"My dear man," said William, "ask him."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOUR-LEAVED CLOVER

One day shortly after, William's purchase of the small tract of land bore fruit. Mr. Baker, of the street railway company, called upon him at his office.

"Mr. Spade," he said, "you own five acres of land in Prince George County."

"Yes."

"At what price do you hold it?"

"Per lot?"

"No," returned the other, with a trace of a smile, "the whole tract."

"What will you offer?"

Mr. Baker considered. "Of course," he said, "as you know, we must have that land. You put a spoke in our wheel—and we expect to pay damages. What is your price?"

"How about three thousand dollars?"

"That's two hundred per cent profit."

William reflected. "Well—twenty-five hundred."

This was the price Mr. Baker had been instructed to offer. "Very well," he replied. "Under the circumstances I suppose it is cheap. Will you be so good in the future," he added, "as to confine yourself to insurance. Remember the old adage 'Cobbler, stick to thy last.' "

"I stuck—to my last," responded William, greatly pleased with a bit of rugged *double entendre* he found in the words.

He told his stenographer of the success of his deal. She heard through his naïvely enthusiastic statement with a face that was frankly disapproving, but the perfect seriousness of which was frequently marred by a smile that could not be quickly enough curbed. It was beyond a doubt a shady transaction, and even the smartness with which he had taken hold of the opportunity, could not erase the taint.

"Will you tell me," she demanded, when he had finished, "why that isn't just plain fraud?"

"It isn't fraud. I simply held something they wanted. They couldn't have it condemned as farm land because it is a village laid out in streets. So they had to pay more for it."

"But how do you consider you earned the additional fifteen hundred?"

"That was the price of the idea."

He re-entered his office. He was in a good humor. In the paper which lay before him was printed a delicately veiled intimation that the announcement of the engagement of Sara Barclay to William Spade, the young business man, might be expected soon—possibly in the early fall. William had been busy denying this for several days now. But it was evident that the rumor had come to stay. His luncheon with Mr. Barclay had assured that. It brought up to his imagination a vision of power and unlimited opportunity. He saw himself standing in a high place and viewing the field with the same breadth of vision as did Arnold Barclay. He saw himself possessed with information that would enable him to hold a hand in the big game. And when the great financier at length should pass on beyond, leaving his irons untended in the fire, there would be no one to watch over them but his son-in-law, William Spade, who would step into the seat once held by the great man, and, backed by endless resources, become a great power himself—a power beside whom the very President of the nation himself would take a secondary place—in fact, if not in name.

It was a picture painted in strong colors. It would be a way to success paved by his own ef-

forts—by his own ability to foresee and select the proper means to bring him to the high place and by his ability, having once arrived, to stay there by means of his brains and courage. Suppose he did marry a girl he did not love. He was congenial and friendly with her—and did not all marriages resolve themselves ultimately into that? Love was simply the lacquer that wore off with use—leaving a more substantial and utilitarian substance to stand daily wear.

A mood of exhilaration had lifted him above the work that lay upon his desk; and his mind did not seem ready to adjust itself again to it. Warm sunshine shone in at the windows. A stray fly buzzed lazily against the glass. It was not a day for indoors and work, but one that suggested rather languor and idleness.

Very well. He would be languid and idle. The world had treated him well—a holiday was due him in celebration. He would play tennis for the rest of the afternoon. No, he would not play tennis. It was hot and the men with whom he usually played were away. He would drive a long way in his automobile and get his dinner at some distant spot. But upon consideration, this too became undesirable—a tame and lonesome achievement. He needed a companion, so that

the luxury of loafing might be doubled in being performed by two. His eye rested accidentally upon the diligent figure at the desk in the outer office. Perhaps there was a feeling of complacent condescension in him, perhaps it was just a humanly gregarious impulse. He rose and strode to the door.

"Miss Ruth," he asked, "has that languid feeling reached you yet?"

She let her hands fall into her lap. "Oh, yes," she replied.

"I have been thinking of antidotes for it."

"That's very easy. Go lie down under a tree. Or get a canoe—"

"That is the solution," he interrupted. "How soon will you be able to start?"

She gazed at him wide-eyed. The relation between the man who employs and the woman who is employed is a delicate one, and she had felt it the part of wisdom to discourage spasmodic sociability, such as that now suggested, as unnecessary and as complicating an otherwise simple arrangement. But she felt an air of comradeship in the offer. To most women the touch of condescension, unconscious though it may have been, would have been annoying. But she felt no jolt to her pride, for his position, his success and his friend-

ship with successful people had built up an artificial barrier between them, the existence of which would have made it unreasonable in her to expect him to pay attentions to her out of deference to her personal charms—or for any other reason than courtesy and good feeling.

Yet she did not approve of the man. His business deals, of which the one he had recounted to her a while before was typical, were not straightforward in the sense that she understood straightforwardness. Her recent reflections upon the subject had reaffirmed in her the conviction that his plan of life was to take the easiest way to success, without splitting hairs as to whether that way was less righteous than it should have been. But, strangely enough, such is the divided appeal of others to us, her appraisal of his method of life did not, or had not as yet, affected her opinion of him as a person. His friendly charm made him diverting to her even in telling her of those acts of which she disapproved.

In reply to his question therefore she said:

"Immediately."

However, while he had been diagnosing his state of mind, the afternoon had been slipping away. He at length suggested that it would give them more time if they took their supper with

them. He made the suggestion in a tentative manner, not being at all sure that she would approve of it even in the interest of having more of the day at their disposal. Somewhat to his surprise she agreed readily. It was quite convenient to her; for her mother was away for the day, and had she dined at home, she would have dined alone.

Thereupon, in his large way, he telephoned to a nearby hotel and had them prepare and send to the office a portable meal along the lines he laid down. When it arrived, swathed in an array of napkins, it was most imposing—lettuce done up in oiled paper looking like hothouse flowers, yellow salad dressing in a silver receptacle with a lid to it, three-cornered sandwiches, French pastry, and coffee in a thermos-bottle.

She was amused at this ostentation. Her idea was that it would have been so much easier and quicker to have purchased the things at the little tea-room on the same block. However, she had to admit that the layout looked festive and inviting. It was put in the automobile that had now become a part of William's equipment, the bell-boy given a liberal largess, and the machine started forward upon its adventure.

She held the brim of her hat against the wind,

and frankly enjoyed herself. He noted this with an approving glance, wondering if she took all her pleasures with the same enthusiasm. It amused him to think that she made no secret of the fact that a ride in an automobile was a rarity to her.

This brought to his mind the fact that she represented a mile post somewhere behind him. Against the advancing civilization which carried him on, she was reactionary. She was an anachronism. It bewildered him to note that simplicity seemed to content her. He had seen that she would have been as well satisfied with food from the little cafeteria as with the more sumptuous repast he had ordered from the hotel. After his experience with other people to whom costliness seemed to be synonymous with desirability, she was not quite clear to him. It was clear, however, that she was of a former generation, a landmark of the drab, dusty past; while his other companions, of whom Sara Barclay was the type, were the bright beacons of his future.

The canal, where presently he held the gunwale of a bobbing canoe while she stepped into it, ran straight as a street to the north. As they pushed off from the shore, she in the bow, he in the stern and the provender amidships, he watched with pleasure the easy stroke of her paddle. The

water, he remembered, was the place where she was at home. He was glad that she had suggested a canoe.

Tall trees rose by the side of the water, shielding them from the broad river beyond. These caught the rays of the afternoon sun and threw a cool shadow over the canal. When the small breeze died down momentarily and the surface of the water cleared, he could see the reflection as of trees growing upside down—until the ripple of the moving canoe cut into them and erased the picture. It was she who called his attention to this interesting thing, resting her paddle upon her knees to look.

People passed them walking upon the broad tow-path and, as they approached the lock-house, they spoiled the surface of the water for a man upon the bank comfortably sketching. They went through the lock, rising from the depths upon the incoming tide until they were level with the water beyond and the great gates opened easily to let them pass. Picnickers stopped to ask them the way to intricate places of which they were blissfully ignorant.

Sometimes they passed canoes coming in the opposite direction—passengered each, as was theirs, by a man and a girl. His companion

would try to diagnose, from a hasty glance, whether the two were married, or imminently so, or not yet inoculated—to use his words. He asserted that you could not tell, because the last were conscious, the second were confused, and the first were ashamed—and the symptoms of all these emotions were the same.

In the woods they heard the clear, liquid whistle of a bird she said was a wood thrush. She rested her paddle and tried to imitate the call. He listened attentively for a few moments and then, putting two fingers in his mouth, surprised her by giving a fair working imitation, to which presently the little bird replied.

"You're smart," she said, admiringly.

"Yes, I am," he agreed, with experimental placidity, hoping to arouse her scorn. In this he succeeded.

"Self-approbation," she asserted, aloofly, "is a dull accomplishment."

In the safety of his place behind her he smiled contentedly.

"Do you always go about finding shortcomings in people?" he asked.

"But you made it so apparent."

"My natural honesty. I find myself unable to conceal anything from you."

She turned half-way about and laughed for his benefit. "Quite," she asseverated, pleasantly.

"I wish you wouldn't try that stage laugh on me. It makes me feel as if you thought you had made a clever retort."

"I had."

He seized the diverting opportunity. "Self-approbation," said he, "is a dull accomplishment."

She laughed again—this time very naturally. "Oh, well," she replied, "you set me a bad example."

Overhead and through the trees they could see the rose-glow of the setting sun. A calm, peaceful stillness, that was like the hush in a cathedral, fell about them. Their paddles splashed gently in the water. In their wake the ripples lisped against the banks. She put up her paddle and let him push the boat forward alone. In her enjoyment of the stillness and of the absence of other human beings, which gave a sombre loneliness to the approach of dusk, he found a joy himself. She took delight in the close presence of the trees, the smooth water, the birds, and in the absence of any disturbing human sound to interrupt her contemplation of them;—he took delight in the one human thing, beside himself, that was there, never ceasing to wonder at her

frank gratification at what seemed to him tiny things.

"Could you return," he said, "from the celestial heights to which you have ascended long enough to partake of so mundane a thing as a sandwich?"

"Oh, yes. I was just pretending to be absorbed in the scenery, hoping all the time you would suggest food."

She took charge of the basket with a feminine confidence in her ability to administer such matters.

"What a fine, stimulating place it is," he remarked.

"I did not know that you observed such things," she replied.

"It is unusual. But at present, under stress of favorable circumstances, I am moved to consider the largeness and pleasantness of the spot. It is so removed from civilization. I can picture Pocahontas and Captain J. Smith sitting here on the bank—"

"The canal having been built in 1830."

"Well, sitting here and thinking how pleasant it would be when the canal was built. It is really a very large and inspiring thought. It makes those stirring days seem as but yesterday."

She laughed. "As a moralizer," she said, "you are superb."

"Thank you," he replied, modestly. "Congenial company seems to bring out my hidden talents."

Frivolous and inconsequential conversations! But this was a day of idleness and adventure, when it was more diverting to watch stones skip pleasantly over the surface than to hear them plumb the depths with large sounds.

On the bank beside them, he looked long and determinedly for a clover with four leaves, fingering the little plants over one by one and always seeming just on the point of finding one. But she, standing smilingly beside him, when he had given up in despair, pointed one out with the toe of her shoe.

"That's the first one I ever found," he said, pulling it through the buttonhole of his coat.

Before them through the tree branches they saw the moon, pale in the twilight. But as the light failed and the sky grew dark, seeming to close in upon them, the misshapen sphere, taking on incandescence, assumed charge of the night. They launched their canoe into the silver reflection on the water and dropped slowly down stream, following the straight ribbon of bright water that

ran between the dark and mysterious canyons of trees. She sat in the bottom of the boat facing him, while he paddled leisurely with the tide. Her light dress outlined her against the dark background and her face, indistinct in the darkness, became a memory only, wearing, as she talked, the expression that his imagination gave to it. He felt a pleasant sense of personal nearness to her and an unexpected satisfaction in the remoteness of the rest of the world.

When he returned to his room, he found lying on his desk a note from Sara saying that she was returning upon such and such a date to the city. He read it hastily and laid it again on the desk. Taking off his coat, he inadvertently put beside the letter the four-leaf clover that his companion of the afternoon had found for him. As they lay there side by side, they were, though the resemblance did not occur to him, like the two arms of a sign-post pointing in different directions.

CHAPTER IX

THE PAGEANT

During the month of October Sara returned—bright, smiling, slightly tanned and with many new clothes William had never seen before. She put both her hands into his with a fine affectation of abandon, and looked laughingly up into his face in charming pretence of seeing that he was really exactly as she had remembered him. Her coquetry was always diverting to him, as it came just up to a certain mark and stopped, leaving volumes to the imagination. Whether it was an alluring bit of acting or an alluring bit of naturalness, it amused him.

She had been anxious for him to meet her at the station in his automobile, and insisted in her letters that she could not *exist a minute* (carefully underscored) after arriving if he did not appear with the car for her inspection. She had purposely omitted to tell her father of the time of her arrival, so that their own automobile would

not meet her. He accepted the expression of the desire as reason enough, even though the desire itself might not exist, and appeared as directed.

As she sat in the machine beside him, he was impressed anew with the perfection of her. Her shoes were absolutely new and fitted her as tightly as the silk stockings drawn over her well shaped ankles. Her gloves and hat were new, and her suit had no sign of a misplaced wrinkle. A bunch of violets, bought by herself, blossomed at her waist. He felt how admirably she was fitted to the purpose for which she was needed. For money expended upon her was so effective. Her purpose in life was to be the object of expenditure. Her upkeep and adornment must always be lavish, as if every day were a feast day. And how well the festive garb became her! A thousand dollars spent upon her made her bloom and blossom like the lilies of the field.

"Sara's reason for being," Mrs. Carver said to William one day, "is to spend money. That is her profession. For that she was born, nurtured, trained and is now kept alive. It is somewhat depressing, isn't it? The preceding generation gathered the harvest, so to speak, in the heat of the day. She in the cool eventide idly scatters it. That is her contribution to civilization, her mag-

num opus, the deed by which she is identified upon the books of the recording angel."

A year ago this doctrine would have made William think. Now it was a platitude. It was the statement of the necessary state of affairs that went hand in hand with high civilization and success.

"I am a spender myself," he said, to show this state of mind.

"So am I," she replied, "to a certain extent. We both help in a downhill movement. Sara and her kind set the pace. They dissipate resources. We follow them—we must also dissipate resources. But with this difference—we must first obtain the resources.

"I have a hard-headed husband who, when we run too close to the edge, sends me into retirement for a while to let the surplus accumulate again. He is old and wise at the game. You are young and headlong. Some day Sara and her crowd will drag you down."

William glanced at her sharply. "How drag me down?"

"You must make the money to spend. That necessity will dull your sensibilities as to how it is proper to make it."

"Do you mean I shall be dishonest?"

"No. You will always be honest. But the list of things our generation considers dishonest is daily decreasing. You can be honest in their eyes yet often be unfair, often dishonorable. Remember it."

"I shall remember it," he replied, putting it in a remote corner of his mind.

The engagement of Sara and William to each other became common news to everyone but themselves. They were invited about everywhere. He, the Fortunate Youth, received everywhere the adulation and admiration he deserved. Veiled allusions greeted him on all sides. Consequential old dowagers disturbed their aplomb to be gracefully facetious with him and perhaps to whisper a word concerning the cap of Fortunatus. Men cultivated him more than ever. His mail was big with invitations. His telephone rang so constantly that it was necessary for Ruth Dunbar to sift the applications for his time as carefully as if he had been a cabinet officer.

He discussed his relations with Sara with no one. Denials of the engagement issued both by the girl and himself had only served to heighten its currency. It was one of those rumors that must either be confirmed or allowed to die slowly and painfully of its own weight.

Mr. Barclay, who of course could not help being aware of the rumor that existed, discovered, in his cold, taciturn way, a congenial feeling for the young man, and if his daughter were late in coming down would enter the room where William waited and smoke his cigar standing before the fireplace in order to listen to him talk.

It was during one of these talks that William first heard the term "war orders." It was a strange term then. Probably there were not three people in the city at that time who guessed how important a name it was. Mr. Barclay mentioned an organization known as the Federal Arms Company, whose stock in his opinion would be a good investment. And William, acting upon the suggestion, bought as much of the stock as he could afford.

Soon after this the New York Stock Exchange opened and the moneyed world stood aghast, wondering what crash was coming now. But the stocks, fooling the prophets, went up instead of down. Federal Arms was one of the first to feel the rise.

By the middle of January the public imagination was beginning to be stimulated by the idea of war-orders, and the stock of companies having such orders rose correspondingly. A rise of fifty

dollars per share became a matter that caused little surprise. William looked complacently upon the quotation of a hundred dollars a share for Federal Arms, although that meant a profit of twenty-five thousand dollars for him—a pure gift, if he choose to look at it closely, from Mr. Barclay.

And a proposition was presented to him that proved to be the beginning of an epoch in his life. An old established steel-casting company in Alexandria, whose business had been gradually dwindling and dwindling until it was barely paying expenses, had the opportunity to obtain some big orders for shrapnel. But the controlling interest in the company was held by a gentleman of fixed ideas who was opposed to the making of war materials. However, he was willing to salve his conscience to this extent—he would sell all his holding to some other person at twenty-five dollars per share (the quoted price being about fifteen) and the new possessors of the stock could run the company as they pleased.

It was therefore proposed by two other directors of the company, who held practically all the remaining stock, to buy him out. Having, however, but sixty thousand dollars between them, and the margin it would be necessary to put up on the stock being one hundred thousand, they came to

William for the extra forty thousand, hoping that he would be able to write some combination of life insurance policies that would enable them to borrow the money. This was impossible, but William, seeing an opportunity for profit, offered to put up the forty thousand dollars himself.

The three men therefore formed themselves into a company for the purpose of buying and holding the hundred thousand dollars' worth of stock. William was able to borrow this much money by depositing his Federal Arms stock as collateral and by adding to it a large fee he had just received. He had Louis Warburton, his lawyer and friend, go over the papers in the case and also look into the charter of the Old Dominion Steel Company to see if there was any clause there which could be construed as prohibiting it from making munitions of war. These matters having been satisfactorily answered, he felt that he had entered upon a deal that promised to reward him with a large profit.

About this time occurred a costume ball of great proportions, having for its object to mark the theoretical passing on of the world and his wife from the seeking after pleasure to the wearing of Lenten sackcloth and ashes. It was to be a carnival—a gay, a properly riotous celebration of

Shrove Tuesday—except as to the fact that since their revelry began at midnight instead of ending there as of yore, the date of the festivity had to be made the day before Shrove Tuesday instead of Shrove Tuesday itself, which robbed it of a little of its flavor.

To this William was to go, gorgeously attired in the red silk costume of the Doge of Venice, in which upon Ascension Thursday the ancient ruler was wont to cast the betrothal ring of the Republic into the sea. The costume was historically accurate, for in order to make it so he had sent home for his notes taken in college on McMillan's lectures on the Renaissance, and from the notes had found the names of books to look up in the great Congressional Library—books illustrated with colored prints from which he pieced together the plan for his gorgeous attire.

What Sara's costume was to be, he did not learn, for she was to take part in a pageant which was to be a feature of the occasion, the nature of which was kept as profoundly secret as the thirty participants were able to keep a secret.

When the night at length arrived, the huge ballroom of a great modern palazzo was thrown open to a throng of Folly's children. And, if money and thought and care had been expended reck-

lessly in the preparation of the individual costumes, it had been expended a hundred-fold in the costuming of the huge room. It had been transformed into a likeness of the plaza of Saint Mark, the walls masked into plaster façades of the Doge's Palace, the Library and the Cathedral. These were gaudy with awnings and streamers. A wild maze of color filled the mimic spot—Pierrots, Harlequins, shepherdesses, dancing-girls, Carmens, Brunhildes and DuBarrys. One statuesque girl was Diana, in flowing drapery of soft silk caught with platinum and gold clasps, bare feet in sandals and leading on leash a big Russian wolf-hound. She mingled with cowled friars, eighteenth century gallants with lace at wrists and ballet girls with stiff, outstanding skirts, revealing an unexpected expanse of silk stocking.

William found himself a child among children —among experts in the game of enjoying themselves. Protected by their incognito, they were more joyous than was their usual state. He was greatly entertained. But as he was beginning to warm up to the spirit of adventure of the affair, he found that it was palling upon his companions.

But if their interest was just at the point then of flagging, it was at once prodded into life again. The pageant that was enacted was one which

was devised to stir jaded sensibilities and to arouse the sluggish enthusiasm of men and women to whom few things were new. Repetition of old things was punishment to them. Their lives were so circumscribed by conventions and forms which prescribed that they must dress in certain set ways for certain set occasions, use certain fixed phrases to express certain ideas, amuse themselves at certain conventional times in certain conventional places, and live minutely and exactly by rules which they had had no hand in making, that in the instances where they were allowed variety, that variety must always be changing. They tired like children, of the second appearance of any form of diversion. It took skill and ingenuity to cater to such sensibilities.

The skill and ingenuity of this pageant and the complete understanding of the problem were apparent in every detail. It had been directed by a professional manager from New York, it had been coached and handled and patted into shape by a half dozen professional dancing experts, actors, and artists in the production of stage pictures.

The audience was quickly seated in chairs which attendants brought miraculously from nowhere, the façade of the Cathedral of Saint Mark divided cleanly and, rolling upon a hidden mechanism,

opened to reveal a stage behind, shielded by purple hangings. Strains from a hidden orchestra floated across the room. The audience rendered the unusual tribute of silence. In a moment the purple hangings noiselessly drew aside, to reveal a lavish and gorgeous scene. It was a skillful picture, soft and appealing in its harmonizing colors, which were aided and brought to life by a wonderful blending and contrasting of dim and strong lights. The eye was caught and held by a shaft of mellow light like a burst of sunshine that floated slantwise across the picture, falling upon an empty throne which took the center of the stage. The chair of this was of white veined marble and upon it, gorgeous against the snowy background, rested a purple and gold cushion. The flight of steps leading up to it had the polish of fine granite. Upon either side stood seven-branched candlesticks heavy with gold, and overhead, carved in a panel that seemed to be stone, was the Egyptian winged sun. Beyond in the background ran a colonnade of big shafts crowned by the lotus-leaved capitals of the Temple of Karnak; and in the openings between shone the red glow of the setting sun.

The music changed to a weird, exotic march, and there entered slowly two huge negroes, wear-

ing gaudy striped headdresses and short kilts. Their skin had been oiled until they seemed to have been cut from polished Numidian marble. They took a place one upon each side of the empty throne. Four graceful girls, dancing a quaint conventional figure, followed. Long rose-colored draperies fell about them. They wore no ornaments save gold bands at their foreheads and gold straps upon their sandals, which caught the light as they moved—and no clothes save the rose-colored draperies. They lighted braziers upon each side of the throne, and the red glow fell like studded rubies upon the metal armor of the soldiers marching behind them. Under guard of these, entered captives—four stalwart young men, selected for their development, bare of arms and leg and wearing chains—a strange sight, if you considered them as twentieth-century youths accustomed to be tailor made, but admirably fitted to the picture. After them more captives—four maidens, barefooted, in short skirts, with white arms bound behind them. Another file of soldiers.

This realism, in the apparent interest of historic accuracy, was rather breath-taking in its frankness. William glanced covertly about him to discover marks of disapproval. But there seemed to

be none. The appearance in public of young women attired for classic dances had made people willing to accept things of this sort. Also it was protected by the fact that this was an historic pageant.

More figures in the procession appeared, filling the stage until it was a charming picture of color and arrangement, a rich, decorative scene that, preserved upon canvas with the same skill that it was arranged upon that stage, would have made a gorgeous mural panel. There was an air of expectance in this inert group whose completeness, save for the lack of a figure upon the empty throne, pointed to the coming of one more impressive still. The soldiers, the dancing-maids, the half-clad slaves, the fettered captives turned toward the portal. A sudden blare of trumpets without. The strains of the orchestra died away and to the motionless tableau was added silence. A nicely balanced moment of suspense; and then, as the violins, beginning again faintly, swelled louder with a soft, lyrical strain—entered the queen Cleopatra, in an inlaid and enamelled chair, borne on the shoulders of four soft-footed black slaves. Splendidly graceful—as only Sara Barclay could be—she alighted as the chair touched the ground and stood for a moment with her foot

upon the first step of the throne, while the whole entourage, in a great wave, prostrated itself before her. She seemed to have taken on the attributes of the young Egyptian queen. She was superb, but breath-taking—as the other Cleopatra must have been. She wore no bit of fabric above the waist. Her corsage consisted of two gorgeously embossed and enamelled disks supported over her shoulders by rhinestone chains. A girdle of dazzling gold and jewels encircled her waist, and from it hung a skirt of shimmering material like cloth of gold, which stopped above her bare ankles. Her ankles shone with rubies, and her sandals were of yellow pliable gold that bent with the movement of her foot. As she turned to ascend the steps she revealed to the audience, with no apparent emotion, a beautiful, graceful, undraped back, gleaming and white.

Conflicting emotions possessed William. His whole being glowed with pleasant excitement. He witnessed absently the remainder of the spectacle—the appearance of Cæsar and Britannicus and the enacting of a certain part of Shaw's "Cæsar and Cleopatra," selected for its lightness and humor; the classic dance of a half dozen girls clad in transparent silk; and, as a finale, the exciting dance of an agile maid whose white legs and

feet wove themselves around a pattern of swords thrust into the floor, in a maze of intricate steps that carried her thrillingly close and safely away from the sharp edges.

Just as earlier in the evening the masquerade had been taken as an excuse for forwardness and freedom of speech, the pageant had been taken as an excuse to go as far as possible, in order to create a sensation—and yet remain uncriticized. The girls in it, for the most part, seemed to be mere puppets, dancing their dances, clad only in a veil, for the reason that they supposed their audience would be interested merely in their freedom and grace of movement. It was strange that they should have been willing to believe that the old Adam in man was so dead. It is strange that they saw no element of hoax in the proceeding—that they had agreed to unclothe themselves, as a result of the suave assurance that cultivated people think no improper thoughts. They were doubtless unconscious that the audience enjoyed their candor more than their proficiency and grace. And it is quite possible, for that matter, that the audience had deceived themselves upon that point. They had come to allow themselves a wide latitude in such things. They saw costuming in their theatres that twenty-five years before would have

frozen the population with horror. They saw their women at the bathing beaches and in their drawing-rooms attired with such carefree syncopation that they had come to believe that reticence in the matter of one's body was unimportant. All of this fitted in nicely with their philosophy of life, which was to make as simple as possible their moral code. In all cases where they could supply additional sparkle to their lives by a broad interpretation of the difference between propriety and impropriety, they chose to follow the broad interpretation.

Historical record shows that one of the first signs of decadence in a people is their willingness to appear in public unclothed. The frankness of the people of this class in regard to their uncovered skins was merely an incidental symptom of the direction that their lust for pleasure and luxury and ease was carrying them.

The guests, stirred into excitement by the frankness of the unusual spectacle, and divided between interest in it as a pageant and enjoyment of it as a startling exercise of poetic license, talked of little else. Some of the actors, flushed with their success, clasping cloaks over their shoulders, and with sandals on their feet, appeared in their costumes

upon the floor. William, noting that Sara was not among these, followed a few adventurous youths and penetrated behind the scenes. He discovered her at length, still sitting in the shadow of a piece of scenery where she had thrown herself after her last exit. Her body was covered with a purple robe and her sandaled feet were crossed alluringly before her. She held out both her hands to him as he came toward her.

A provoking smile played about her lips. As she raised her arms the purple robe fell from one rounded shoulder. Her white, smooth arms completed a picture of glorious loveliness that his tumultuous soul could not resist. Fires burned in his blood. He did not touch her hands, but in an instant found her warm body in his arms and his lips upon the curve of her ivory shoulder.

Sudden sanity brought him to his senses like a dash of cold water. His arms relaxed and he stepped back from her as one newly awakened from a dream. He was astonished at the strange William Spade.

As for her, her poise was undisturbed. "Why, Billy," she drawled, with ironical calm. "Why this burst of energy?"

Deliberately she reached for her cloak and drew

it over her uncovered arms. Then, with easy impudence, she touched him in the face with her fan of ostrich-plumes and disappeared through the plaster arches of the cathedral door.

William escaped from the house as soon as he conveniently could. His outburst of feeling had disturbed him, but also it had filled him with excitement. It was not unpleasant to have strayed out of bounds and then to have found the rule against it had been repealed. The primitive frankness of the girl had stirred his blood, and the stirring of his blood had made him take her in his arms. The world had approved of her frankness as exhibiting a cultivated absence of prudery—and she had not objected to the embrace. There seemed to have opened for him a luxurious expansion to his sphere of freedom of action.

Warburton, returning at dawn, found him sitting before the dead embers in his fire, still considering this phenomenon. The lawyer stopped for a moment to smoke a cigarette.

"I wonder," said William, momentarily depressed by the cheerless morn, "if my old professor could have been right when he said our world was on the down grade."

"Yes—theoretically and for the sake of some-

thing to talk about," responded the other cheerfully—"but as a place to live in it is quite good enough for me."

CHAPTER X

OLD DOMINION

The stock of the Old Dominion Steel Company went from twenty-five to thirty, from thirty to thirty-five, showing William a paper profit of about sixteen thousand dollars. But one morning about a month after the formation of the holding company, he received a visit from Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Temple, his two partners in the affair. From their air, partly of determination and partly of conciliation, he saw that they had a matter of importance to discuss with him.

"Mr. Spade," began Schwartz, immediately, "we are facing a grave situation at the factory. Our men have served notice that unless the institution is run upon a profit-sharing basis, they will leave us in a body. There are plenty of other mills only too anxious to have them. It seems that other war-order places are distributing shares of stock to the men, in proportion to their salaries, which are paid for by monthly deductions from their pay, allowing them the increase in value of the stock."

"Why don't you do that?" asked William. "You must keep your force."

"We haven't the shares of stock."

"Surely your holdings and Mr. Temple's would be sufficient."

"Oh, no, no. We couldn't think of sacrificing our personal holdings."

"I don't see what you are going to do, then," he asserted, determinedly. That was not exactly a truthful statement, for he had quite a strong suspicion of what they planned to do.

"The thing we shall do is this," replied Mr. Schwartz, setting his jaw. "The Old Dominion Holding Company, of which you and Mr. Temple and myself are the board of directors and the sole stockholders, will sell out its stock to the Old Dominion Steel Company, in order that its stock may be redistributed to the men."

"I object," exclaimed William, heatedly. "You permit me to help you out of a difficulty by furnishing forty thousand dollars for your purpose—and just as I am about to begin to reap the profit I expected from it, you crowd me out."

"Your objection will do you no good," said the other coldly. "Temple and I vote sixty percent of the stock against your forty."

The two men sat stolidly upon their chairs.

They had the might upon their side, which was the only necessary consideration. They did not need to discuss the merits of the case. They had only to explain what they intended to do and then do it.

"I suppose," exclaimed William, sarcastically, "in redistributing this stock you will redistribute your shares to yourselves and my forty percent to the men."

"Naturally," returned Schwartz, calmly.

"You see," added Mr. Temple, blandly, "now that our stock has gone up so much we do not need the assistance of your forty thousand. So we set you by the roadside."

William called in Ruth and dictated a letter addressed to the directors of the holding company, objecting to this treatment and asserting that if the stock advanced in price he would bring suit.

"You can put yourself on record if you want to, Spade, but it will do you no good."

"Let me explain something to you, Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Temple. I serve warning on you now that I can get back at you later on—if you crowd me out now—and I will do it."

"The bluff doesn't go."

"You are going to crowd me out?"

"Certainly. The thing will be done in regular form tomorrow."

They rose to go. William turned his chair back to his desk.

"Remember what I told you," he said, in parting.

When they had gone, he called up Warburton on the telephone and asked him to come over to see him as soon as possible and bring a copy of the charter of the Old Dominion Steel Company.

"Warburton," he said, "the Old Dominion Holding Company, as you know, bought four thousand shares of stock in the Old Dominion Steel Company, for two hundred thousand dollars. Of the purchase price, Schwartz, Temple and I put up one hundred thousand and we borrowed one hundred thousand on the stock. The Steel Company now proposes to buy out the interest of the Holding Company."

"Paying off the loan to the bank?"

"No. Assuming the loan."

"In other words, buying on a margin."

"Yes. Now my recollection is that their charter prohibits them from doing that."

"Yes, it does. They are permitted by it, as is legal in some states, to buy in their own stock when they have a surplus sufficient to pay for the

stock in full. But they are not permitted to speculate in it."

"At present, of course, the company has no surplus."

"Then the action of their board of directors in authorizing the purchase of this stock is *ultra vires*, as we say—beyond their power. Therefore, if they do purchase this stock, which is an illegal procedure, and force you to sell by virtue of the vote of their own directors who are also the directors of your company, they work an injustice upon you."

"There is no doubt in your mind of that legal position?"

"None at all. Of course, it all depends on the 'last guess of the last court,' but with that against them, they would never let it go to court. You had better tell them to back down."

William considered his lawyer thoughtfully. "I think I shall let them buy it," he asserted.

"Let them buy it?"

"You think that if the stock went to seventy-five, for instance, the court would make them sell it back to me at thirty-five, the price they paid?"

"The court would be bound to, since you were defrauded of that difference."

William Spade leaned back in his chair, with a

smile of satisfaction upon his face. "Thank you," he said. "You see, Warburton, the beauty of the matter is this. If the stock goes down from now on, they take the loss. If it goes up, I get the profit."

CHAPTER XI

A PRIOR CLAIM

One afternoon, as he was about to leave his office, William had a telephone call from Warburton, asking if he could take the lawyer and a United States marshal in his machine to a remote garage in southeast Washington, where there was an automobile that was to be attached for a debt. Warburton was that kind of man. He never liked to walk anywhere if he could ride in another person's automobile, he never really enjoyed dining unless it was as someone's guest, never went to the theatre except upon invitation—in short, with the utmost amiability, he hired out his engaging personality in return for whatever was bid for it. However, as William liked him and considered him a good lawyer, he did as requested.

The garage in which the guilty automobile rested was a tumble-down stable on a small street. The machine was identified and the marshal permitted to go about the mystic rites of attaching it.

This entailed a visit to the residence of the owner. The owner and his wife and two children lived in two rooms on the third floor of a dingy house nearby. The rooms had all the characteristics of shiftlessness and careless poverty. A broken pane of glass was covered with a square of brown pasteboard. The knob of the door was gone and its place taken by a hook, a broken lamp shade was turned with the damaged portion toward the wall—all as though this were a mere behind-the-scenes place, where the easiest means of upkeep was the best. But the automobile, considered presumably as the coefficient of their respectability, had been accoutred and kept up to date with the greatest care. Self-starter, electric lights, extra tires, all the things which they seemed to feel their dignity as automobile owners demanded—were there on the car.

"If you wish to reflect upon the degeneracy of the age," remarked Warburton, carelessly, after their mission had been accomplished, as he crossed his knees comfortably on the seat by William, "that sort of thing gives you a better target than the high society you were shooting at several nights ago. The rich people can afford their pleasures—these people cannot. But they take them anyway."

The lawyer thumped his yellow cane upon the floor of the car.

"Gad, how I hate a low-class person. The old-time state of respectable poverty had a certain nobility, don't you know, attached to it. Thrift, honest pride, saving for a rainy day—all went hand in hand with it. You remember the old style of person who would dust off a chair for you with her apron. These were the salt of the earth. But, Spade, they don't exist any more. The poorer they are today the bigger the bill they run at the corner grocery. Instead of saving to buy a home, they buy automobiles. The poorest rented hovel down by the river has an automobile standing before it. They are pleasure-mad—and they spend every cent where it makes the biggest show."

"That is all very true," said William, good-humoredly, "but I'll bet the reason you are irritated now is because you think you have carried away the odor of that third floor upon your clothes."

The other brushed a possible trace of dust from his trouser leg—with a cavalier air of disgust.

"Well, I hate the person that puts on another layer of cologne instead of bathing. That's the characteristic of the class—show. Why, the

fresh young citizen that condescends to be my office boy—at ten dollars a week—takes his girl to the theatre and leads her down to a two-dollar seat. More than that, he takes her to supper afterwards, and he has then about a dollar left to carry him through the week. For a while he abstracted car-tickets and stamps from the office store to help out. That's Young America of the boasted middle class."

"And it scales along like that right up to the top," replied William. "Sometimes I secure twenty or thirty thousand dollars, which has been held in trust, for a young fellow and he starts right off at full speed spending it as though that were his income instead of merely his principal. I think people are beginning to lose the distinction between income and principal. It is all just cash—suitable for spending."

He said this in a sudden spirit of fairness, because he was aware that he and Warburton were doing much the same thing in their higher strata as were the people Warburton criticised in their lower one. They were all expending their resources for froth and show and glamour. And in expending resources right down through the social scale they were expending the net resources of the nation.

He dropped Warburton and his marshal at a point directed. The lawyer waved him good-bye with a cordial nonchalance, as if he might have been the host and William the grateful invited guest.

William became conscious about this time, through the agency of a sixth sense, of a familiar presence upon the sidewalk amidst a throng of people waiting for a street-car. It was a large assemblage, and he was paying but scant attention to people who were not seeking to occupy the same territory as that over which his car had to proceed. But a magnetic force caused him to look up and his eye met that of his stenographer, patiently waiting. The fact that she was talking to another man did not deter him. He stopped by the curb, and offered to take them in the direction they wished to go.

He looked, with an emotion that was somewhat more than curiosity, at the man who was with her, wondering what Ruth Dunbar's life outside his office might be. The man was tall and broad, with an air of whipcord strength, and his lips met firmly in a straight line. The girl introduced him as a Mr. Roth. He shook hands with a strong grip that would have momentarily crippled a less wiry person.

"I did not catch the name," said Roth.

The other looked into the clear blue eyes. "Spade," he replied, smiling.

"Mr. Spade, I am very pleased to meet you."

The girl eyed this performance with a quizzical smile. "Mr. Roth," she observed, as she seated herself beside the driver, "is particular about names—and indeed any sort of fact. He insists upon being right."

Roth, not taking this as banter but as a mere interesting statement of truth, arranged his large frame in a sitting position at the doorway by her feet. For William Spade, a certain fascination attached itself to the presence of the man. He covertly watched him, and presently, having considered him for the space of perhaps two blocks, as a result of a rough but accurate character analysis made in that time, drew him into conversation.

He did this merely by explaining briefly what his errand with Warburton had been and retailing somewhat at length the lawyer's philosophic reflections concerning the lack of thrift and other staunch virtues among the poorer classes. He watched the Roth man narrowly, to see how he would rise to this subject. The man rose to it earnestly, with a certain pedantic certainty of expression.

"The statements your friend made are to a great extent true," he asserted, in the manner of a person not giving voice to an opinion, but explaining rather an inflexible truth, "but the reason the poorer classes make just as much show and ostentation as they can is primarily because the rich classes do it. Cultivated people do not practice moderation, or the art of living within their means, or any of the drab virtues. That fact is made evident by the reports of their actions in the papers—and sets the pace for the whole social scale down to the man that cleans out the sewer. Respectable, frank poverty, or respectable, frank modesty of means, is considered a mark of inferiority. Everyone must make a show, no matter how it unbalances his life."

"Well, now—for instance?" queried the girl.

"Take the very simple case of a nine-hundred dollar clerk escorting his best girl to a dance. The greatest crime he can commit is to be stingy with his money. It is little short of an insult if he does the thing in a cheap way—even though it corresponds exactly with his station in life, and the girl's. He must endeavor to carry off the performance as nearly as possible in the way it is done by the socially elect—taxicab, flowers, and the rest of it. Sometimes he hires his dress-suit."

"What do you deduce from that state of affairs," William asked, interested in the man's didactic certainty. In the back of his mind a curiosity arose as to the relation Roth bore to the life of the girl beside him. Under his veiled scrutiny, these two gave no hint of the extent of the intimacy, or the lack of it, that existed between them.

"I deduce this," the man replied, "that from the top down to the bottom we are expending our resources lavishly for things we do not want. The rich man spends a thousand dollars for a hundred dollars' worth of pleasure, the poor man spends five for one dollar's worth. And that means the loss—not of just so much money—but of the staunch virtues of thrift, caution, moderation and plain living that have been the backbone of the nation."

William found himself considering these words —and large words they were—with a little more respect and thoughtfulness than he had expected to accord them. He found himself letting the man measure up to a higher standard than he at first awarded him. And he was conscious too that, strangely enough, he was vaguely weighing the merits of this man with those of William Spade—to what end, it was impossible to say.

"The loss of these virtues—the loss in moral fibre and stamina," continued Roth, "is serious retrogression—not for the individual alone but for the whole country. It is the worm in the bud. Carthage and Rome and Venice and pre-revolutionary France went down into disgrace and dishonor from just such causes. We have a national duty to tread carefully lest we follow them over the same road."

Ruth had told him that she wanted to go home, as she was taking Mr. Roth to dinner. William drove to the small house facing the park, to which he had taken her after their canoe trip. Across the street was the grove of oak trees shading the hill that sloped down to the creek and forming a broad wooded lawn for their tiny house, as if it had all been laid out for the purpose of furnishing a view from those windows. As they alighted, he asked after her mother, whom he had not seen for fifteen years or more. He did not go in then, as it was so near their dinner hour; but said he would come again to see her—a statement Ruth Dunbar did not think was meant to be truthful.

The next day was Sunday. William, in common with other hard-worked social and business men, slept peacefully through six or seven hours of good morning sunshine, arousing himself about

noon sufficiently to get up for his newspaper and read it in a desultory way as he lay in bed. Yet once he had thought it a hardship to have to sleep in the daytime.

About half past one he walked two or three blocks to the club where he sometimes took his meals, and had luncheon. The club was deserted at that time on Sunday, lacking every appearance of festivity. He sat down in a big chair by the window looking out at the sunny, depopulated street. An automobile went by with three people in it, a man sitting on the floor. He began to think about Ruth Dunbar's friend Roth—the man with the absolutely crystallized and certain ideas. He wondered what claim Roth had upon her—and the speculation was not without its flavor of resentment. The idea of someone seeking to marry his stenographer was in the nature of an affront to him. Ruth Dunbar was a part of his life—his business life, certainly.

He realized that what Mr. Roth's claim upon her might be was no concern of his. His stenographer's private life and her official life were two quite different things. The one he knew about—the other he did not. As he thought about the matter, he decided that he should not allow this distinction to exist. Since she was so important

in his business and so much depended upon his business, it was his duty to take an interest in her as a person. And, he reflected, that very afternoon was an unusually opportune time to begin to take that interest.

Ruth Dunbar was therefore surprised to see his automobile stopping before her door. Her mother was just on the point of going out. William remembered nothing of her at the seashore except that she had been very slender and had worn black dresses. She wore a black dress today, and was still slender—graceful, he thought. He liked her soft, low-pitched voice. She went with him in his machine to her destination, Ruth sitting on the floor in the place Roth had occupied the day before.

"I hope, Mr. Spade," her mother said, "that you will take care of my little girl in your office, and not let her work too hard."

"I do everything I can. I am only afraid that some villain is going to come along and marry her."

"I sincerely trust so," asserted Mrs. Dunbar, with uncomplimentary fervor.

"Judging from the men," observed William, "I meet upon street-corners with her—" He paused eloquently.

Ruth glanced at him quickly, as if wondering what turn of his mind had made him think of that incident in this connection. "You raise up a glittering generality," she said, "upon a single instance."

"Was it Richard Roth you saw?" asked Mrs. Dunbar, conversationally. "Richard was telling us last night that his sister had been so fortunate. Her husband is in the employ of a steel company in Alexandria that is now making munitions—and the company is giving its employees a share of their very large profits."

"I wish something like that would happen to Richard," said Ruth, thoughtfully.

Presently they set Mrs. Dunbar down at her destination. "Now," he asked, as he and Ruth stepped into the machine again, "where may I have the pleasure of taking you?"

"Home, please," she replied.

"Is it necessary for you to be there for the rest of the afternoon?"

"No."

"No engagements, plans nor expectations for the next hour?"

"No."

"In that event I suggest that we look for trees and meadows and things."

She nodded, smiling. He held his hand out at the side of the car and, turning a corner, sent it speeding along a deserted asphalt street. Another turn, a change to macadam, a coast down a steep hill, and a pull up another, a broad bridge with a tiny, silver stream inlaid in the dizzy depths below, a mile or two of woods and fields and occasional houses upon the one side, and a screen of swiftly passing trolley poles upon another, the end of the trolley poles, and they had been transplanted as upon a magic carpet from city to country.

More macadam roads. Beside her, the panorama of far stretching fields—meadow land lush and green; young wheat fields and freshly ploughed fallow-lands quartering each other with heraldic precision; distant woods and the indistinct mountains afar off. The damp, earthy smell of the furrow rose from the roadside like perfume. A field of clover, crimson as blood, a meadow lark, yellow breast and whistling his four clear notes as he flew low along the surface of it, a narrow stream choked with water cress and boys wading barefoot among it—she saw as things thrown quickly upon the screen and off again.

"Gorgeous," she would exclaim in delight, and the picture was gone, to be rearranged and pro-

duced for the next automobile behind their flurry of dust.

"Very pretty indeed," he would reply, looking at his speedometer. "You like the weather and the green things," he added, on one occasion.

"If I could only see them. They are dragged across my eyes so fast I only get a glimpse of them. I should like, rather, to sit on a fence and look at it."

A brown, untravelled lane, plunging into woods, came abreast of them and, without a word, he swerved the car into it like a man hitting a moving target. She gasped, and he laughed back at her.

The road widened out at a spot deeper in the woods. He drew the car to the side, scaring from the underbrush a cotton-tail rabbit. The automobile came to a stop and the engine ceased to revolve, leaving the woods in surprising stillness.

"Now what?" she asked.

"I propose to find the fence."

He struck in among the trees, she following. The wood was grown up with brush. Fallen trees, whose slumbers upon the ground had long been undisturbed, disputed the right of way with them. He held whip-like branches aside for her to pass. She felt the touch of his hand as he

helped her over round trunks that offered her no secure footing.

She was interested in herself, as she followed his lead without question or discussion—mildly wondering where their course might lead them. Once, as he came to an abrupt halt, entangled in an unseen briar, she stopped herself unexpectedly with a hand on his shoulder. The fabric on the shoulder was a smooth, soft serge. Unseen, she laid her hand upon her own coat sleeve. It had not the same pleasant richness.

She reflected that this was because the ratio of cost between the two was as of seventy to thirty-five. His coat did not look better than hers, but it was better. The unstarched cuffs of his shirt had not the ostentatious sheen of silk, but they were silk. He had taken pains, even in the minutest detail, to align himself with the best and richest—the upper few. It amused her to think that he had spent money, time, energy and the work of his head and hand to rear up a barrier between himself and her (not singling her out individually, but inevitably including her with the others) and now she was permitted so close to him that she could feel the texture of his coat.

What quirk of his mind was it that permitted him to put the serge coat in a position such that a

stray briar would cause it to be touched by her hand? Why not have remained at home and have avoided this contact of inequalities? Did he find her interesting, was he merely curious, or was he just the seeker after adventure? Or, strange as it might seem, did he momentarily resent the fact that he had found her devoting her time to another man. It was a thought such as only a feminine intuition would have prompted. She made a grimace at the back of his head as it occurred to her.

They followed a path, which trailed on in apparent aimlessness and ended at length at the long-expected fence. This fence was at the edge of the woods and commanded a view over a field, gently sloping toward a road some two hundred yards away, and over the undulating hills beyond the road. Automobiles passed now and then upon the road—a view of civilization that pleasantly accentuated the remoteness of the spot. The deep shadow of the woods in which they stood fell far out across the fields, and all the trees beyond cast long, dark fingers over the sunny grass. The moment had the melancholy sweetness of evening.

The big shadow of the woods lengthened and enveloped the road. It climbed part way up the opposite hill growing more distinct until the com-

ing dusk wiped it out. The reflected red in the eastern sky departed like mist, and, shining wanly, one lone star appeared.

" 'Whilst twilight's curtain spreading far was pinned beneath a single star,' " she murmured.

He was looking at her as she spoke. Presently, perhaps something of the influence of twilight prompted him to remark: "I could also repeat a quotation."

"Could you?"

"It is something like 'look out upon the stars and shame them with your eyes.' "

His grave glance rested steadily upon her. A wave of excited interest surged up within her, like the water of the ocean swelling out over a calm beach, seething and then retreating, leaving it as it was before. She laughed softly.

"Something like," she repeated, looking at him, with nothing showing now in the eyes but amusement.

"Is the quotation incorrect?"

She met his glance with a mischievous composure. "You omitted something?"

"I did?"

"Have you your loose-leaf note book here?" she asked, by way of reply.

Wondering, he reached into a side pocket for a

small book to which a pencil was attached. In the fading light, she wrote two lines—and tore out the page.

"Read it when you get home," she said. "You will see that you omitted something that made it quite unsuitable for your purpose."

Amused and yet surprised at their unexpected crossing of words, William put the piece of paper and the notebook in separate pockets. And well might he be surprised—if he did not realize the concession he had just made. He had admitted that she was—a woman, a fact that in his talks with her hitherto he had been unconsciously ignoring.

They made their way back through an unexpectedly dark woods. She found herself frequently now with her hand upon the soft serge coat, for, in order not to lose his guiding influence, she kept close behind him and her outstretched hand brushed against him as frequently as against the trees. And more often he turned to take the hand to help her over rough places. The touch of his coat was pleasant—as was the touch of his hand.

A dim lightness ahead marked the position of the road. Out of the darkness the shape of the automobile appeared. At a touch of a switch,

two beams from its big eyes lit up the twilight. She sank back upon the comfortable cushions, watching him slowly warp the car around in the restricted space, until the headlights pointed the way home. She saw the brown road give way to a white one. She saw dimly, obscure objects, like the scenery of another planet than hers, moving quickly by. Now and then blinding lights would appear ahead, blotting out the road and the dim scenery until the car appeared to be careening dizzily through space. At an impatient bark of their horn, the lights would lower and the road and the earth appear again. A whirring of wheels and the light was gone and forgotten—an intruder upon their world.

A feeling of contentment possessed her—of physical ease, of soothing motion, of pleasant detachment from her own life and from the ground itself, as though she were indeed floating smoothly through space visiting the stars. It was like awaking from a fairy dream, when the light at length fell upon her house and the automobile came to a stop at the curb.

As he bade her good-night, he was thinking that she would be almost the first person he would see in the morning. For months she had been almost the first person he had seen in the morn-

ing—and had been a constant companion and confidant for many hours during the day—in somewhat the same impersonal sense that his telephone was. And in all those hundred days he had bade her good-morning and said her farewell without touching the hand, which he held now.

A change had come over her—of which he was conscious but did not fully understand. He was conscious of a change in his attitude toward her, and later, in his room, when he opened the paper she had given him, he was still more conscious of it. The hasty writing on the leaf said:

> "Look out upon the stars, my love,
> And shame them with your eyes."

It made him laugh. But he sat for a long while, leaning back thoughtfully in his chair, still holding the paper in his hand.

CHAPTER XII

A PASTEBOARD CODE

Ruth found it was a little past eight o'clock when she entered the house. Her mother had not yet returned. The younger brother, who furnished the air of masculine stability for the household, was to call for her and bring her home later. The girl lighted the gas range in the kitchen. Under the warm glow of its oven she made thin toast which she buttered while it was still hot. Pouring boiling water over tea leaves and adding to the table a few Sunday evening accessories, chief of which was marmalade, she sat down to a thoughtful meal.

She might, she reflected, have been at that moment eating a more sumptuous repast in a much more pretentious place, had she chosen to do so. Her companion had made the suggestion. But she felt that she liked him better in the atmosphere that she herself was always free to enjoy, rather than in places which were part of his life.

She did not care to see him in his own environ-

ment. She disapproved of it. It was no secret to her that he had invaded the circle of the socially elect calmly and with farseeing eyes and that he had matched the selfishness of those people with a selfishness of his own that was as careful and calculating as theirs was careless and idle. He had focussed his eyes on success and he rode straight for it, not caring where or over what he rode.

In his business he had been of great benefit to many people. But if he saw that in the course of that business he was starting a young man on the road to extravagance and perhaps to dissipation and ruin by furnishing him with thousands of dollars the young man's dead father had not intended him to have until later, he did not hesitate—but provided the money. He used no selection in making his money. He had a hard and fast code of decency and honor to which he firmly adhered. If he said, I will, he did. If he felt an obligation, he lived up to it. But the two great Christian standards—trust in God overhead and the unselfish love for his neighbor below—he did not understand.

His life in the fashionable world had set up in him a pasteboard code of righteousness. It seemed to her that that strata of society was a muddle of false ideas. In her small dealings with

society people, she had met many with high ideals and fine sensibilities. But their life had the effect of smudging over high ideals and fine sensibilities. Their respective candles were burning under bushels. Their faiths, hopes and charities were distorted to the public gaze and before the eyes of their own kind. They did not discuss faith and hope and charity because their overtrained sense of repression taught them that these things would be dull subjects of conversation.

They were trained to be of the opinion that every cultivated person had all the virtues in his heart and lived up to them as a matter of course, and that it was simply boasting his advanced state of civilization to speak of virtues. It was taken for granted that they possessed unvarying fear of God and unselfish love for their neighbors—but taking these things for granted destroyed them. They substituted for conscience a confidence that their trained intellects would distinguish between right and wrong. And naturally their intellects sided with their desires—which searched after new sensations and caused them to alter their code to fit the case. Their righteousness was a thing of expediency.

There was money to spend and a broad field for pleasure. There was an abundance of idleness.

They were idle themselves and they hired footmen and lackeys to stand about and help them be idle. Wherever he looked, Satan found a rich field of inactivity. Men and women kept house with each other and changed about from time to time as their fancy dictated, warding off the stigma of it by a succession of marriages and divorces. Their theology narrowed down to the statement that whatever was necessary was right.

She knew of these things, not because she ever had had the money to enable her to rub shoulders with such people, but because a number of fashionable women still retained a friendship with her mother. Her grandfather had been upon the Supreme Court Bench and, as a young woman, her mother had been well-known in the Capital. But the financial reverses that followed his death had rendered association with her rich friends impracticable. Her slender purse permitted her to see them now only occasionally—at the woman's club to which she belonged and at long intervals at luncheons in their houses. In this way the gossip of that world filtered through to Ruth.

Ruth saw, in his every move, that William Spade was a proselyte to the creed of these people. She was aware, from his acts and speech, that some experience in his past life had given him the

notion that the world was against him, and that every advantage he gained for himself was but an act of self-preservation. The creed of whatever was necessary was right fitted in, therefore, admirably with his desires.

She realized that she and William were of two different sorts. She had the simplicity of ideals and desires that belong to a God-fearing and inspiring generation. He had the complication of ideals and desires that belong to a generation that had achieved success and was celebrating the event. She had the instinct to conserve and to strive. He was acquiring the instinct to dissipate and sow to the four winds.

With an earnestness that was totally unconscious of the inference, she assured herself that such a man was not the sort of man she would marry. The man she would marry must be strong and brave enough to curb his grasp as directed by his conscience. He must not be so glib and plausible that he could argue down his conscience. He must have humility—rather than make a god of his self-confidence—as did William Spade. Then with a flush of ashamed amusement, she laughed aloud at herself, for there was no occasion to decide this question in the case of William Spade. And she had already spent an hour in deciding it.

His greeting to her as he entered the office at midday was as usual, except that it contained just a shade more of friendliness. There was a blaze of enthusiasm then in him. He had spent the morning at the office of his stock-broker, and he had come back fired with conviction. It seemed as though the war stocks had paused at last at the top of their stupendous rise. For a week Federal Arms had been steady at two hundred and fifty. Old Dominion Steel had gone up to one hundred and dropped to ninety-five. Consolidated Steel which, starting a few months before at twenty-five and marching on without a halt to three hundred and twenty-five, had dropped to three hundred. The value of these stocks was imaginary. The end of the war would cut their price in half. Orders had been taken two years ahead and there would be no more orders. It looked as if the wild burst of enthusiastic buying was about to fall of its own weight.

As he had passed that morning the private office of Mr. LeFevre, the head of the brokerage firm, that gentleman had emerged from it to shake hands with him. The Federal Arms stock they were holding for him was worth a hundred thousand dollars, and he was a person the firm must cultivate.

"Mr. Spade, you are going to sell your Federal Arms soon, are you not?"

"Tomorrow or next day, if it looks as though this is the top."

"You're wise. And bear this in mind. These stocks are going to drop just as fast as they rose. And someone is going to make a lot of money as they go. Consolidated Steel will be down to two hundred by the first of August. Remember that."

William had listened absently. He was thinking only of the profit upon the stock he held, which had given him the sinews of war. He was now in line to step onward toward real power and real wealth—to make himself felt in the daily history of the country. Power and money! It seemed that he saw them in his grasp.

His desire was to make a great deal of money at one blow—not to earn it, but to seize it. He needed riches to maintain his position. He must make a big gamble to get it, pit his own intellect and powers of strategy against those of others and get the money before they could.

Upon the following day he sold his Federal Arms at two hundred and fifty, realizing a profit of one hundred thousand dollars. The day after

it dropped to two thirty-five. Old Dominion Steel dropped to ninety. Consolidated Steel dropped to two hundred and ninety-five. He felt that he had taken his profit at the proper moment.

"You managed well," Mr. Barclay said, when William told him of the success of his venture.

"I think the high point has come," William asserted, eyeing the older man intently, wondering what was his opinion upon the stock market situation.

"That seems to be the consensus of opinion," said the other, noncommittally.

"Some men are selling short," William continued.

"Risky thing to do." The older man turned to drop his cigar ash in the fireplace. "Still," he said in a moment, with his wry smile, "I may do so myself."

Those last five words crystallized the strengthening intention that William had had in his mind for the past two days.

He saw the risks, but determined to take them. Everything pointing to the fact that he was right, he felt that he must put himself in a position to make a profit from being right. At one time

business had for an important axiom—do right. Now its axiom was—be right. William was reasonably sure that was his condition.

He, therefore, instructed his brokers to sell five hundred shares of Consolidated Steel at two hundred and ninety dollars a share. His rest should have been troubled that night, but it was not.

CHAPTER XIII

PAPER PROFIT

A man's wife thinks she knows the quirks and convolutions of his character better than anyone else. But she does not know them better than his stenographer. His stenographer sees him during the burden and heat of the day, when he is in action and his mind is working. His wife sees him at rest—and what is so uninteresting as a machine at rest!

Ruth Dunbar saw William Spade in action and saw the workings of his mind. She was only mildly interested, but it was strange to have so intimate a knowledge of another person's affairs. It was part of her business to be informed of his bank balance. She knew his holdings of stocks and bonds, because she looked over the monthly statement from his broker and checked up the charges for interest. His personal and his office affairs he made no link between. She made out the checks for his office rent and for his apart-

ment rent, for his telephone, for his tailor and for his garage. She would, when he asked her, call up any of these and make complaint of the service given. She would buy theatre tickets if he were giving a party and were pressed, or thought he was pressed, for time. She had even ordered a dinner for ten at a fashionable restaurant.

He was considerate in asking such service of her—else she might not have been willing to render it; but she found it interesting to do these things. His enthusiasm for whatever he had on his mind was contagious. When he came into the office with a big envelope full of samples of shirt materials, the first thing he did was to spread them all out upon his desk and call her in for a conference. And, sitting opposite each other, they would have a splendid time deciding which patterns he was to take.

Their relations with each other, however, remained distinctly that of employer and employee. Their respective lives after office hours, dissolved, as far as each other was concerned, into obscurity. Once, to her surprise, he bought her a present. She was looking at the window display of a picture shop which adjoined their office building, when he happened along.

"I have just made a hundred thousand dollars

by certain stock transactions," he said, after some discussion, "and I should like to make you a handsome present."

"Oh, thank you. That one."

She pressed her finger against the glass. It was a print of Dante and Beatrice, in a plain wooden frame, and was valued at fifty cents. He strode into the store with her and purchased it.

It amused her—knowing from the broker's statement what stock transaction he referred to—to think that this was her share of the huge war profit the country was accumulating. She was glad it was small, for she could not quite bring herself to believe that William Spade, and other similar speculators, deserved the large sums of money that good fortune dropped into their laps. But, strangely enough, she had not gone half a block on her homeward way, when she met with occasion to revise her opinion somewhat—and to concede that in some cases the war profits conferred real and deserved good upon their recipients. The occasion was the meeting with Richard Roth, whose way happened accidentally to cross hers. It was a tribute to his perseverance and ingenuity that this coincidence occurred frequently. He was accompanied by his sister, Mrs. Bullard—a somewhat unusual cir-

cumstance, for he usually preferred to stage the accidental meetings unattended.

"Richard was telling us," Ruth said, in a moment, her mind still running on the same subject, "that you too are among those who are sharing war prosperity." She held up her picture. "I have just had a present from a friend who has recently made a large sum of money on war stocks."

Mrs. Bullard considered the size of the picture. "He must have made a huge sum to buy all that."

"Everyone seems to be making money on the war," she continued. "We bought fifty shares of Old Dominion Steel Company stock, and are paying for it by giving up half our salary every month. And, my dear, we have been living from hand to mouth."

"I should think so," commented Ruth.

"But we were fortunate to get the stock. It was allotted to the employees of the Company. Yesterday it went up to a hundred and ten, which gives us a profit of about five thousand dollars. Our dream of a house of our own, instead of a rented hovel, seems about to be realized."

"All this is paper profit," Roth explained, in the interests of accuracy.

"Oh, yes. We have to finish paying for our stock first, before it will be delivered to us, so we can sell it again. But how we have skimped and saved to get along on half the salary. You know, all your salary is never enough. And half of it! It's sickening. We've been wearing clothes that we're just simply ashamed of. And as for food—I hate to say. As we have three children it is almost impossible to get along on what we have had at our disposal."

"But surely you couldn't pay for so many shares of stock simply out of a salary?" Ruth asked.

"No. A thousand dollars we paid at the very beginning, representing the savings of a life-time, so to speak, plus the proceeds of a sale of furniture and a clandestine visit to the pawnshop. A Jewish gentleman is holding my engagement ring as collateral. Isn't that frenzied finance?"

"But won't it be glorious," exclaimed Ruth, "to have your house."

Spurred on by this sympathetic attention, Mrs. Bullard stopped on the street corner to draw painstakingly upon the back of a letter, several squares adjoining each other which she explained was the plan of a house. She extracted some pictures, taken from a magazine, out of her pocketbook—a colonial staircase, an Elizabethan bay-

window, a little Spanish balcony and other heterogeneous items which she asserted were to be incorporated in the structure. Poor architect to whom that house was entrusted! But she was ecstatically happy, which was the main thing. As Ruth said, here was one case where the war stocks had done a philanthropic act.

When William Spade entered the office in the morning, she thought, as she looked at him, how much more praiseworthy it was to have earned five thousand dollars by self-denial and much sacrifice than to have earned a hundred thousand by taking the advice of a friend. There was more of compassion than criticism in this comparison.

William's training had been such that it did not occur to him to doubt the importance of material success. The business men with whom he was now thrown spoke earnestly of the financial prosperity which had enveloped the country, and discussed means of making it continue. They viewed with pessimism any signs of the coming of the end of the carnage and bloodshed across the water, which carnage and bloodshed was pouring a steady stream of profits into this country. They viewed with more than pessimism any signs of their own government being drawn into conflict, however righteous the cause, because it would

cripple business and turn away the stream of profits. They had translated all their emotions into terms of dollars and cents. Statesmen and eloquent men spoke of honor and glory and patriotism, but the nation at large, while echoing their words, thought always of the cost of these things and down in their hearts, appeared to have come to the conclusion that they were luxuries—too expensive for a great commercial nation, whose business could not be interrupted.

She saw him gradually hardening under this influence. She saw him absorbing, grain by grain, the drug of selfishness, until the natural generosity in him was inert. She saw him adopting new rules of life, which centered about the principle that one must, before all things, protect and nurture and advance his own interests. After that he might give thought to the welfare of others. The finer sensibilities of his nature were growing less distinct and materialism was taking command of his aims and impulses.

She was sorry for that. For her service with him had developed in her, in spite of her disapproval of him, a loyalty to him. She recognized in him an efficient general in the affairs in which he, and she in a smaller way, were engaged; and her heart said, "Vive le roi."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LEOPARD'S CAGE

About ten o'clock one morning Ruth answered the ring of the office telephone.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Spade," a voice in the instrument said—a cultivated yet precise voice, carrying with it the inference that nothing further was necessary than that its owner should say simply that such and such a desire existed in her bosom.

"Who shall I say wishes to speak to him?" asked Ruth.

"You need not say." The voice was unpleasantly curt.

Ruth smiled. "This is an office," she explained. "It is customary for us to know."

"I am aware that it is an office," returned the voice.

Ruth reflected. Here was evidently a person who had been roused too early in the morning.

"I am sorry to be annoying," she explained, smoothly. "But Mr. Spade has been very much

worried of late by certain people. It is difficult for me to recognize voices over the telephone."

There was a slight pause. Then the person at the other end of the wire, her irascibility suddenly gone, said, "Please say this is Miss Barclay."

Ruth raised her eyebrows. The thought came to her that it would be necessary for William Spade in his future days to be diplomatic early in the morning if such were Miss Barclay's usual moods. This did not promise much contentment and happiness. However, she did not have space then to ponder on this phase of the situation. She hastened to announce to William the name of the fair suppliant for audience with him, and was not surprised to see him leave the office shortly afterwards.

Not many minutes later, William was helping Sara into his automobile. He discovered, as Ruth guessed, that the lady had been aroused a little too early in the morning. Noon was her luxurious idea of dawn, and she did not begin seeing people until three or four o'clock, by which time she was ready to assume the splendid carriage of her shoulders and her mellow pleasantness of voice and manner. But to surprise her into wakefulness at ten-thirty in the morning was expecting too much. Of course at that time

she could be nothing but natural—the primitive Sara, experiencing no outward excitement to stimulate loveliness of character.

It developed that she was being presented with a new automobile for her summer use, and, since she was to leave the city in a day or two, it was necessary that she should make her choice immediately. Her father had, in his peremptory manner, made several appointments for her to see dealers between the hours of eleven and twelve, which he expected her to keep.

"I had to have your opinion on the car," she said to William. "So I finally persuaded the goddess who answers your telephone to let me ask you to come."

"She was merely following my instructions," he observed.

"You have so many silly rules. Every business man spends about three-fourths of his time trying to make himself seem important. You were probably reading your newspaper all the time."

"The irritating part about that to you is that you can't be sure."

She yawned frankly, as fitting reply to this. "What makes you creep about the streets?" she asked him, with an insulting lack of emotion.

"Can't this old machine move at more than three miles an hour?"

"Where did you get that disposition?"

Quick as a flash her manner changed and she leaned forward with a dazzling smile.

"Don't you like it?" she asked.

He laughed at her swiftly adopted coquetry. "Is that your disposition?" he demanded.

"For my friends."

They visited four or five motor agencies. In these she sat or walked about in a restless way, interrupting long arguments, asking petty questions, ridiculing any speech of William's which seemed to denote a knowledge of the subject, amusing herself by irritating everyone and smoothing them over with her bland smile when she felt she had scored too heavily.

"Great day! You're spoiled," exclaimed William, suspending for a moment his investigations under the hood of a machine.

"Don't you think I am charming?" she demanded, when they were in his automobile again.

"I think I shall recommend to your father corporal punishment for you."

Again the dazzling smile. "Do you love me?" she asked, sweetly.

He looked at her seriously, weighing a number of things in his mind.

"Suppose I did say I loved you," he said, at length, calmly. "Would that satisfy your fancy?"

She had a frivolous retort ready, but did not say it. She thought of a serious speech, which was too serious. And then the time for replying having passed, she remained silent. Had she dared to be sure she loved him, the game could have ended there. Had she not been fascinated by his personality, mystified by his assumption of an almost contemptuous superiority over her, forever uncertain whether her charms would be valid upon him, she would have taken pleasure, in her present mood, in rebuffing him with a hard jolt. She could not adopt either alternative. She could not hold him and she did not want to let him go. So she said:

"I wish you would be careful where you drive. We almost collided with that car. My life is precious."

"You haven't answered my question."

"I didn't know you wanted me to. What was the question—as to your loving me. Why, my boy, I have so many men loving me now I'm about crazy."

In a most uncomplimentary manner, he began to laugh. "Who are they?" he demanded, with an appearance of incredulity.

"They are too numerous to mention. Louis Warburton is the last one—unless you include yourself," she added, with satanic composure.

"Warburton!" he exclaimed.

She examined him leisurely, speculating as to whether that name could draw a spark of jealousy and wondering, if the jealousy did spark, whether he could be more, or less, entertaining.

"Does that make you jealous?" she demanded, at length, weary of simply letting the problem lie, awaiting decision, in her brain.

"Boiling," he replied, cheerfully.

"I believe there is no pigeon-hole for jealousy in your mind. You are a mere machine."

He gave her a long, curious glance.

"Think of your saying that. Your entire public manner is a machine-made product, applied for the sake of appearances. When there is no public of importance present, you are a spitfire. Sitting down to breakfast with you every day would be like being one of these fellows who sits in a cage with a leopard."

He said it experimentally, because it amused him now and then to prod her into activity—but

he knew how near to the truth the statement was. She concealed a yawn behind her fan.

"Billy, you bore me," she said.

When he had stopped before her house, she still remained seated. "We have not decided upon the automobile," she remarked.

"The twin-six is the best one," he said, tentatively.

"Very well. I shall get it."

CHAPTER XV

THE INNER VOICE

In selling Consolidated Steel short, William Spade had overlooked one fact that a multitude of other people had already had the same idea. For a week or two before he had sold his five hundred shares people had been saying that it could not possibly go a point higher and had been backing their judgment by selling freely. This willingness to sell had put such a quantity of the stock on the market that the price began to recede. And the more it receded the more convinced people became that it was due to go down as fast as it had gone up. William Spade was one of these. He was one of a thousand or so who had sold when the stock was at two hundred and ninety.

There was such a horde of these that the stock, after first dropping to two hundred and eighty, began to rise. More speculators sold at that price. Then a large contingent who had sold short at three-twenty-five came to the conclusion that forty-five dollars a share was a reasonable

profit and consolidated their winnings by purchasing stock to cover their obligations from those who were selling short at two hundred and eighty. This held the price up and many persons, who had sold at anywhere from three-twenty-five down, bought and took their profit.

Now a number of the timid sheep who had sold at two-eighty ran to cover and bought at two-eighty-five to keep from losing more. Other "shorts" began to come to cover before they had lost their profits. There was a multitude of orders to buy and not many orders to sell. The stock went to ninety—to ninety-five. Hundreds who had not yet covered, made a frantic effort to get tangible shares to put in place of the imaginary ones they had sold. There was a large demand and not much supply. The stock went to three-ten, to three-twenty, to three-thirty. The higher it went the more reluctant were people to sell, believing the rise was still to continue.

When it became known that so many speculators had been caught in this flare-back, the practice of selling short on that stock became decidedly unpopular. There were still hundreds who had sold short and had not yet covered. Some of these were buying at whatever price they could, in order to get rid of their obligations—sending the

stock up daily. Others were "sitting tight," convinced that the rise was only temporary and that they would soon be in a position to escape with whole skins.

William Spade was in this latter class. While not a little disturbed by the unexpected turn of affairs, he still believed he was right in his first diagnosis of the matter and that the stock was still due for a decline. Naturally it disturbed him to take his pencil and figure out that, with the price at three-fifty, he had lost just thirty thousand dollars.

But his confidence in his own judgment was strong, and his sub-conscious faith in his luck was stronger. He drew no long face. His sporting spirit was good. Thirty thousand dollars was thirty thousand dollars, but if he lost it it was spilt milk and, as such, was not worth crying over.

But when the stock reached four hundred, the thirty thousand became nearly sixty thousand. The loss of sixty thousand dollars was stupendous. The spilled-milk theory would not cover that. He was stubborn. He rebelled at the idea of losing such a sum. And his pride galled him. It was like a lash upon his flesh to think that his much vaunted judgment had cost him the great price of sixty thousand dollars.

Warburton came to visit him one day; and William, his head and heart—in fact his whole life—being full of but the one thing, unburdened his mind. It was bitter to have to admit to this man, who had looked up to William Spade as a sort of semi-god, whose judgment was never wrong and whose luck was perennial, that he had steered his craft upon the rocks. But he must tell someone. He was but human—he hungered for sympathy.

"Hard luck, old fellow," observed Warburton, in the easy way he took the troubles of others. "Now you'll have to get after the Old Dominion Steel Company and make them pay the piper."

"I've been thinking of it."

"Thinking of it! As your lawyer, I am going to *do* it. I shall write the letter today. And particularly appropriate it is. If one steel company steals from you, you steal from another steel company to pay. Very neat, what?"

"I don't like the word 'steal.' "

"Poetic license, my boy. Just to complete the epigram. But I shall write the letter. Cheer up."

"Don't write the letter until I tell you."

The lawyer paused with his hand upon the door.

"When," he asked, with an affectation of care-

lessness, "are you going north to see the divine Sara?"

"First week in August. And you?"

"Later."

Toward the last of July, Ruth Dunbar was given a two weeks' vacation. She and her mother were to spend the time at Starkwether's hotel at Bound Beach. The office was a dismal place without her presence. In fact the city was dreary anyway. All the houses William was accustomed to visit in the winter were boarded up with wooden shutters. His club seemed to be put away for the summer. Curtains were down, chandeliers done up in netting, the chairs enveloped in Mother-Hubbard gowns. It was stuffy and hot there, and his footsteps echoed in the empty rooms.

If he wished amusement, he could have a practical demonstration of the principle of the fireless cooker, by going to the theatre or to any one of a hundred moving picture places. He spent all his afternoons playing tennis, because he felt that his mind, which he could not keep from being despondent, needed the backing of a body in good condition. In his pessimistic mood, he looked with a sort of amused contempt at the way the other young men there took their exercise—an hour and a half of tennis or golf to store up physi-

cal well-being and afterwards several highballs to dissipate it again. To William, health and vigor were precious, and this careless handling of them sacrilegious.

His own good health made his courage good. Every time the stock went up five points, he lost two thousand five hundred dollars. Many and many a day he had seen it do that, and was still seeing it do that. But his tenacity never faltered—it would have been better if it had. He was borne up by the conviction that some day the thing must come to an end. And having that conviction, he stood by it. It takes courage to follow implicitly one's own judgment.

He was doing almost no business at all. The city, save for those in government service, and the merchants, was deserted. There were few persons who needed his services. He had, however, expected this state of affairs and had on that account accepted an invitation to visit the Barclays on the first of August. But a few days before that date he telegraphed that he would be unable to come.

He felt that he would have lost his mind had he been compelled to play for a whole week the game Sara liked to play, keeping her stimulated and diverted, meeting new people and keeping them

stimulated and diverted, and endeavoring to appear stimulated and diverted himself—a mental feat he had no ambition to accomplish and was not sure that he could.

The day he sent that telegram the stock had reached four hundred and fifty—a phenomenal rise at which all those who took an interest in such things stood aghast and marvelled. But William was loser by the sum of eighty thousand dollars.

A small incident at this time made a strange impression upon his mind—strange because it was the impression that would naturally have been made upon a naked South-Sea islander—but not upon a product of a high civilization. But, like plus infinity and minus infinity, the highest state of civilization is in some respects synonymous with savagery. As he was walking along a wide avenue near the streets which are the centers of evening festivity for poorer people, he paused for a moment, idly, to listen to the hoarse talk of a man in a red-banded hat, around whom a throng of equally idle people had also gathered for a moment—to hear his uncouth but earnest words.

"My friends," shouted the voice, husky from long abuse in the open air, "if you are in trouble, I say take your troubles to Jesus. If your heart is sore, call upon Him. Brother, if you have lost

your job; or, sister, if your baby is lying on a bed of sickness, tell the Man in Heaven about it. Don't carry that weight in your heart. If you feel that all your friends are against you and the world is treating you hard, Jesus Christ is on your side. Take the hand He is holding out to you. Most of you think this world is hard, but I say to you that the world is easy, if you will trust Jesus Christ, the Man who made it."

Wondering that people should listen to such platitudes, such repetition of well-worn truths, yet unexpectedly keeping the homely phrases in his mind, he walked on up the street. "Emotional Christianity," he thought, "for the consumption of the half-educated—who like to intoxicate their minds with temporary thoughts of heaven and the golden gates, and, sobering up ten minutes later, go about their sordid lives as usual."

But one thought remained in his storm-tossed and wave-battered mind. Suppose it were true that when man had come to the end of his own resources—when his own feeble strength seemed as but the hand of a child against a great rock—suppose then he could call in the aid of a Higher Power and rest his trouble upon divine shoulders. It was a comforting thought. But a thought for

weak brothers! For men who had failed in life! But for William Spade, no! His life was his own problem. He would not admit defeat or the weakness of his own arm. Once having sunk spineless upon the ground and calling aloud for help, he would be forever impotent and useless. He must never give in.

This was the voice of his training and culture—convincing him of his own importance, his own power, his own efficiency and his own ultimate omnipotence. For what else is civilization? Within was the voice of the savage, awed by the immensity of the powers that seemed to be turned loose against him, blindly groping for a helping hand in the darkness. He spurned the inner voice as calling upon him to take a step backwards. For the refining influence that had bred in him learning and confidence in his own power, had cast out humility.

The God whom he knew was a historical person. As a present influence he ignored His power, His precepts—His very existence.

CHAPTER XVI

BOUND BEACH

At his brokers' William had now put up all the collateral he had—a hundred and five thousand dollars' worth of securities—and continued to hold on. He considered himself fortunate in that he had enough money to enable him to do so. Many other unfortunate individuals had no choice but to buy themselves out of the trap they had lucklessly entered. He was now convinced, rightly or wrongly, that he was going to lose much less than eighty thousand dollars—if he held on long enough.

When the stock, reaching four-fifty, stood there for a whole week as if it had come to the end of its rise, he felt as if he had been given a precious gift. For the first time the tension on his nerves relaxed. At first he was exhilarated. Then a physical slump came over him. He awoke one morning with a fever. And his doctor, looking him over, told him to leave the city immediately.

It was a favorite drug with doctors; and his

malady was a favorite malady—his system was run down and required a week or two for recharging with strength and vigor. An easy prescription—for the doctor. But what of the stock market, asked William.

"Has your presence had any effect on it in the past month," asked the physician, briskly.

"No."

"Then try another system. Walk around your chair. Change your luck. Forget about the thing for a week."

An omen, a voice from the oracle! William remained dumb, wondering.

"Is there any place you can go that is not reached by telegraph, telephone or the daily papers?"

"Not that I know of," William responded, doubtfully. "Yes," he added, "there is a place."

"Then go."

And William went. He could not help thinking how strange it was that, in this ebb-tide of his fortunes, he had refused to seek the presence of the woman who should have held a place in his heart; and had ended now by seeking the presence of a woman who held no place in his heart. For the haven he sought now was old Mr. Starkwether's hotel at Bound Beach.

CHAPTER XVII

HOLIDAY

It was a strangely subdued and quiet William Spade that Ruth Dunbar knew at Bound Beach. Curiously enough, the first glimpse she had of him was from nearly the same spot as the first sight she had ever had of him. William, landed on the beach by the motor-boat that had ferried him across the inlet, walked up the sands carrying his bag—a pleasant sense of peace and quiet filling his heart and an unaccustomed congeniality with the world flickering within as he watched the waves roll in and listened to their soothing roar.

She was waiting for him at the bend of the beach—quite as if his advent was not an astounding event and as if watching him walking along she had not twenty times decided that it could not possibly be he. As he had first seen her fifteen years before, she had, Undine-like, just emerged from the sea and the sheen of water still shone on her white arms. It was not just the sort of bathing-suit she had worn then, but she was graceful—

more graceful than the slender child had been.

"I was wondering," she said, as he approached, "if you were going to prove to be real."

He set down his bag and took her outstretched hand, looking at her with frank pleasure.

"I hope I am real. The other night I wasn't. I had a fever and saw those crimson things Mr. Kipling writes about."

Her appraising and serious eye rested upon him, with the motherly concern that her long caring for the minor things of his life had bred in her.

"You look indeed as if you had been ill," she said, quietly.

She let him help her on with her waterproof coat.

"Why had you a fever?" she demanded, accusingly.

He did not intend to tell her. That was the main part of his plan. It was partly from shame at his mistake, but mostly from pride. He would not call upon her sympathy when he was down. It was not her trouble, and she was entitled to immunity from it. The troubles of others, he thought, are never of interest to people.

"It was hot enough in Washington to give anyone a fever," he replied, therefore.

She noted the evasion in his answer. Her examining eye had already told her of something amiss. She said nothing, but her mind went back to a time when she had decided that one day his luck would turn against him. It needed no explanation now to tell her that the day had come.

She had known before that when the day did come, she would be filled with compassion and concern. The mother instinct in her was strong. Anxiety to offer her ministrations to him—wounded on the field—was her first impulse. But she did not offer them—he did not even suspect that she wished to offer them; for she knew she must be reserved and cautious. He dwelt upon the other side of a stream, whose bridge she must not cross.

She understood therefore why it was a subdued and quiet William Spade that spent his week by the seaside. And, because there was a certain elation in her at watching what she conceived to be a moulding of his character, and because of the restrained sympathy she had for him, she felt that he had become a person for whom she had more of understanding. It was an anomalous fact that heretofore she had insisted on keeping up the barriers between them that he himself had constructed, and it was just as strange now that she

should be interested in having him take them down—if but temporarily.

Either she was finding in his character something new or else something was developing there. She had not expected that he would be entertained by the simple pleasures that the beach afforded. She had not expected to find that he would be interested in lying on the beach beside her and watching the sky and the birds, while she read or sewed or, having something to say, talked with him. She had not expected that he would follow the usual custom there of going to bed at nine, or that he would be up at six in the morning to bathe in the ocean. She was surprised to find that, on a day when she and her mother had gone for a trip to a nearby and very civilized summer resort, he had helped old man Starkwether put a coat of paint upon the keel of a boat, pleased as a boy at his own skill. In fact that was what he seemed to be—a boy willing to be entertained by simple things.

He never tired of Starkwether. The old man brought up memories of his childhood. He laughed at his blunt way of insisting upon his own rights, covering up his firmness with an almost suave diplomacy. When Ruth and William were in the boat-shop one day, a man came

for the purpose of buying some paint with which to cover a small house he was building. There was quite a colloquy as to just the color and quality of the paint, the customer being apparently hard to suit. The old man meanwhile watched him narrowly from under his bushy brows, speculating upon something. When the material was ready, the customer lifted it from the floor.

"Mr. Starkwether," he said, with a sunny smile, "I'll pay you for this some time when I see you."

This appeared to be the crucial point. "Abner," said the boat-builder, sternly, "set down the can of paint." Then, with the utmost urbanity and interest, "How are you getting on with your new house?"

Obviously, after that, there was no way of getting the conversation back again to the subject of the paint without paying for it, which the young man did.

William found such things diverting. They kept his mind from turning back to the city. In addition to this he had resolved not to think of the stock, and with the superstition that seems to go hand in hand with anything that resembles gambling, he did not think of it. He had a subconscious feeling that if he kept his mind free from

his deal for a while, it would bring him good luck. It was rather an unworthy intent, but then he was not engaged in a very uplifting business transaction.

However, the weariness of his constant and nerve-racking attention to the stock market in the past few months made absolute freedom from it a luxury he had never dreamed could be so restful. He was satisfied to do nothing at all. He allowed Ruth to decide, when she felt so inclined, as to the disposition of his day.

He, who had always been on the alert for something to quicken his blood, found himself quite content to sit under the shadow of a wreck partly buried in the sand, and watch her make mysterious stuff which she spoke of as "tatting." He thought that after she once found she could do it, she would have been satisfied. But she kept on. After a while he absorbed the idea that the tatting was used for something. Or he would listen to her read aloud. She read to him from a pirate story they had found at the hotel—a tale that supplied him with vicarious adventures while he lay comfortably on the sands.

She was noted at Bound Beach for her skill in handling a sailboat. As that was one of the things about which he knew nothing, he was al-

ways glad when she wanted to go out in the cat-boat that lay at anchor at the inlet. He soon absorbed a working knowledge of her lore and was able to sit at the tiller and put the little boat through its paces with great satisfaction to himself. Sometimes he found her curious glance upon him.

"Well," he said, on one occasion, "am I such a duffer as that?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You were looking at me in such a strange way."

"Don't you think the situation is strange. Instead of being in a hot office, me your handmaiden, at your beck and call, we are down here on a broad, windy ocean where I don't have to do what you say unless I want to."

He laughed contentedly. "I would move the office down here if I could," he said.

He threw over the tiller, bringing the nose of the boat up into the wind. The girl dodged the boom as it swung over, and took her seat on the windward side. He beamed with satisfaction with himself for his seamanship.

"Would you consider," he said, suddenly, "that you were my handmaiden at my beck and call if I

requested you to wear a certain white dress this evening—you probably know the one."

She flushed with pleasure. She had not supposed that he knew one dress of hers from another. "One having short sleeves?" she asked.

"Yes."

"It would be a pleasure for me to serve you in that particular. Or," she added, with a serious air of politeness, "in any other."

"I shall remember your words."

William did well in asking her to wear the white dress. It left her round, smooth arms bare, and was cut just low enough to show the clear white skin of her neck and shoulders. She was as fresh as a newly cut flower in it. It gave her an air of comely cleanliness that was much more than skin-deep, for it seemed to extend inwards to her heart.

After dinner, or supper as they termed it there, they went out upon the beach. It was low tide and a wide promenade was rolled smooth and level for them to walk upon. She carried a silk scarf over her arm which the wind blew across him. He pinned the corner of it idly to his coat with the pin that was the insignia of his college fraternity; and, when presently she drew it round her

shoulders, she found that she was attached firmly to him.

"What do you wish with me?" she asked.

Apparently nothing, for he released her immediately and fastened the scarf at her throat with the pin—a sacrilege that in his college days would have been regarded as a signal for dire portents and distress throughout the union. But the only thing that happened now was that she said:

"Is that your fraternity pin?"

"Yes."

"What would Miss Barclay say at seeing it in such a place?"

She had meant never to mention that name, or even indirectly to bring herself into comparison with this other girl. But she felt a sense of nearness and friendliness to him tonight, which made her say whatever came into her mind.

"Sara Barclay is a far-away person," he replied.

The subject had a fascination for her. She had a poignant curiosity concerning this absent one, whom she had never seen and whose name until this moment it had been expedient to keep in the recesses of her mind rather than upon her tongue.

"Why have you not been to see her?" she asked, mildly.

"She is so complicated. I needed rest."

Yet he had come to visit her. Non-combatant though she considered herself, she could not restrain the flush of triumph that threw a sunset glow upon her face.

"Rest lightly, little piece of gold," she said to the pin upon her breast. "You can never tell to whom your master will lend you next."

"It is in order that it may have a better opinion of my constancy," he said, without wavering, "that I am giving it to you now."

She bent her eyes covertly upon him. Gently, gently she felt the quicker beating of her heart under the pin itself. Farewell now, thin assumption of non-combatancy! She was in the lists—her badge had been pinned upon her. If she wished to withdraw, she must do so quickly. But:

"Thank you so much," she replied, with her best smile.

The moon shone brightly that night before they left the shore. At half past nine, that midnight on Bound Beach, had any one of the population been suffering from insomnia, he could have seen the strange sight of two people walking slowly and contentedly homeward, as though they did not know night had come; when all honest folk should be abed.

The rest of William Spade this night is the peaceful and dreamless sleep of one upon whom the gods have showered favors. Let him rest! Let his mind be calm and soothed with pleasant thoughts while it may. For on the morrow he returns to his city of strife, where Fate, nerveless and heartless and free from any fear of nausea at her own deeds, has staged, carefully and minutely, a surprise for him.

In the early morning, motor-boat and wagon and train bear him, reluctantly homeward. The scheming Fate puts the morning paper in his hand and laughs as he lets it lie upon his knee, unanxious to enter the cauldron sooner than necessary. But the news must have been printed in hot type, and incandescent letters have burned their way through the folded sheet, for, unable to stand suspense, he tore it open and the statement hit him as a blow in the face.

Everything was gone. Consolidated Steel had risen seventy-five points in a week. All his hundred and five thousand dollars—huge sum it seemed—was wiped out. The bloodless face and drawn mouth must have assured the schemer of the success of her surprise.

CHAPTER XVIII

WILLIAM TURNS THE SCREW

Dazed and beaten, William took his bag as the train stopped at a station and descended with the normal throng, who seemed to see nothing different in the aspect of the world. This was the city of his birth—his home. Like the prodigal, he was going to his father.

The thin-haired and bright-eyed old gentleman lived over again his own misfortune in the tale of his son. His mother received him with the joy of mothers. The mother instinct in this case was so keen that it overlooked rather than discovered the trouble in his heart. The years had mellowed his father's resentment. In the autumn of his life he was gathering golden ears, which, lying upon the floor of the granary, disguised the ever bitter fact that it should have been full to the eaves. But this much his philosophy taught him—that no unhappiness is so great but that it is followed ultimately by a healing peace of mind. With a child-like faith in the scheme of the world, he poured

balm upon the wound. William, feeling the philosophy was frail for use in the rough-and tumble world, was nevertheless given heart by the congenial presence of the older man.

That night he boarded a train with a surprising buoyancy of spirit—due partly to the trusting optimism of his father, who urged him to get to the scene at once, suggesting vaguely that perhaps something might be done, and partly to the latter's assurance that, though he had failed to achieve riches and power, he would find himself ultimately contented in poverty. But William Spade was not to be content in poverty, in defeat. The first stunning result of the blow had worn off, and his blood was beginning to circulate. Suppose his brokers had not sold him out. Everything hinged on that. He might still have a fighting chance.

At the same time he did not forget that he still had a sheet to windward. His claim against the Old Dominion Steel Company was not as straightforward an asset as he could have wished it to be, but in his present extremity, it was the straw he might be compelled to grasp. He regretted now that he had run away from the scene of operations, on his doctor's advice, in the hope that the pot, unwatched, might boil. He had left word that

Warburton was to transact his business while he was gone, but what could Warburton do under the circumstances. However, he telegraphed the lawyer to meet him at the station in Washington.

"Man," cried Warburton, all but embracing him, "you are like one from the dead. If I had had you—"

"Have they sold me out?" demanded William, not hearing what he said.

"No, no. I wouldn't let them."

The other grasped an iron pillar for support.

"Louis, you're a wonder. I feel as though someone had taken a locomotive off my chest."

Relief was the only emotion he felt. He listened uncomprehending, to his friend's long tale of how he had telegraphed everywhere, even to Sara Barclay, trying to find him.

"But how did you stave them off?" he demanded, at length.

"I wrote to the directors of the Old Dominion Steel Company making claim upon them for the advance in price of the stock you formerly held and laid the case before your brokers. They were satisfied that you were financially strong and held on for you."

"Very good, very good," William repeated. "That's all right. They put the screws on me.

They have got to expect the same treatment in return. I warned them that I would do it."

"That's sensible talk," said Warburton.

Had he still been in the holding company, his share of the profit on the increase in value of the stock since the time the company was dissolved would have been about one hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

"They will never let the matter come into court," asserted Warburton. "It would knock the bottom out of their stock. They know they had no right to buy you out and, after a firm exchange of letters, they will give in. They will offer to settle out of court for say half, but will give us two-thirds, I imagine, if we stick up a good rugged bluff."

The opening of operations against the Old Dominion Steel Company marked a very definite point in William's life. Although the Old Dominion Company had forced him to relinquish his interest in their stock, he had the facts then to prevent them from accomplishing their purpose, but had withheld them in order to get his adversaries into a trap. It was clear to him that, having allowed himself to be deprived of his interest in the stock, he had no possible moral claim to its rise in value, since he had not participated in the

risk. But the doctrine of expediency he had absorbed from the money hunters who surrounded him pointed to the great staring fact—that he had a strategic claim. A lever was in his hand that was powerful to dislodge the cash he needed and let it drop into his lap.

He had been surrounded by men who had had no choice but to make money wherever they could, Their servants, their houses, their automobiles, their free-handed pleasures had required a steady stream of money, and they had taken it where they found it to throw into the hopper. William had now his back against the wall. He, too, needed money to throw into the hopper. His position, his prestige, his self-respect made it imperative that he should have money. And he saw nothing but to use the lever that was in his hand.

That was the definite step. It was not the loss which would thereby result to the Old Dominion Company that mattered. The company was rich and unscrupulous and not only could afford but deserved whatever chastisement they would receive. But this was the first breaking down of his own high personal standards—the first sign of the giving way of his resistance to the influence of the spoiled citizens who surrounded him.

Their stagnant moral code had taken hold of

him. Their state of being answerable, each man only to himself, had numbed his spiritual instincts. He had grown to consider God and the hereafter in the same category as boundless ether, the heat of the sun and the courses of the stars—stupendous and incomprehensible but of no pressing personal moment.

Warburton's letter to the directors had begun by calling attention to the letter William had written at the time, protesting against the sale of the securities held by the holding company, and warning the two other directors—who were also directors of the steel company—that he considered himself unfairly and fraudulently dealt with. In view, therefore, of the rise in the price of the stock and the consequent financial loss to William Spade, and in view of the fact that the purchase of the stock upon margin by the steel company, the same being contrary to its charter, was entirely illegal and beyond its power to act, and further, in view of the fact that the purchase was forced upon the holding company by the vote of two directors who were also directors of the steel company: the Old Dominion Company was, therefore, called upon to make restitution to the holding company, and especially to William Spade, by returning the stock thus illegally acquired.

The reply to this was brief and evasive, avoiding the main issues and indicating an intention to take no further action. Warburton's second letter was a brief repetition of his first with a concluding paragraph to the effect that if satisfactory answer were not made by such and such a date, suit would be brought. This was William's strong point, as a suit against the company would result in a drop in its stock, and would cause great loss to the individual stockholders.

This letter was answered by a call from the company's attorney, who tried to convince them that their attitude was unreasonable, but who at length spoke somewhat indefinitely of a compromise. He said, however, that the whole matter would have to be taken up by the board of directors. His attitude, however, was decidedly conciliatory. Warburton found out later that the reason for this was that, no matter what the outcome was, the directors of the steel company could not lose. For, before the stock was distributed to the men, the possibility of trouble on account of the clause in the charter had been discovered; and the stock had been sold to the employees "subject to the company's legal right to purchase and redistribute providing that the employees guarantee the company against any loss

incident to such purchase and redistribution," which appeared a most innocent and reasonable provision to the men, who did not know how the stock had been acquired.

The lawyer informed William of this state of affairs, but William did not feel that it was necessary for him to alter his course of action on that account. Warburton said he saw no reason why the outcome should not be in every way satisfactory. This being the case and since the meeting of the board of directors of the steel company was not to occur until two weeks later, he packed his trunk, told William he was going away, but did not say where, and made a flying trip to the north to see Sara Barclay.

CHAPTER XIX

A DIAMOND-SHAPED PIN

William, actuated by many motives, wrote to Ruth Dunbar, telling her to extend her vacation and stay a week longer at Bound Beach. Had he but known Richard Roth was there at the time and, upon hearing of the extended vacation, arranged to extend his vacation also by one week in order to stay by the sea waves, William might not have been so eagerly altruistic. But since he did not know it, he was happy in the belief that she was enjoying herself.

And she was enjoying herself. It would be inaccurate to describe Roth as an engaging personality, yet certainly he was entertaining in his own especial and particular way. His mind was like a city whose streets all run at right angles and are the same distance apart. A person soon got to know his way about—but there were no surprises. Ruth felt that she could find her way blindfolded about Richard's mind—the plan of it was so simple and straightforward.

Nevertheless the city of his brain was an interesting place. He took her along a different street of it every day. There was no street named Humor Street, which, naturally, would run diagonally. Neither was there a street named Lie Street, nor Selfish Street, nor Ostentation Street, nor Temper Street. There was a Sensitive Street which took the place of Temper Street; and there was an Ego Street, an important thoroughfare, from which all streets both ways were reckoned.

This was a conceit of her own, which, however, was of interest to him when he understood the idea. He actually set about making a plan of the mind city and naming the streets—with her help. This was the nearest he had ever approached to an appreciation of humor, and he appreciated that only because he looked upon it as a diagrammatic representation of an intangible thing.

His mind being thus carefully arranged, it was not a difficult matter for him to think aloud, and he gave her his impressions of the day as the day progressed. If he found a shell upon the beach, he would find a multiplicity of ideas in it. He could give a Latin name to it and, like a phrenologist, tell her interesting characteristics and peculiarities of the former tenant. He would take her on detective expeditions to spy upon the habits of

the little sand snipe that fed upon small animal life at the edge of the surf. Or he would pick up a bottle on the sand and say that it had contained such and such a substance and that it was used upon steamers bound from certain ports to certain ports, giving a careful dissertation on the reason why—all as though his words were being taken down *verbatim* to appear later as a monograph upon the subject.

As a friendship it was not unlike an intimate personal acquaintance with the Encyclopdia Britannica. But with this difference. The Britannica book has no such thing about it as contagious enthusiasm. The facts that Roth knew were of infinite value and interest to him. His sympathy with the birds and the flowers and the little insects that lived in the sand was profound. To have been bored with him on that account would have been to show almost a sacrilegious contempt for the work of God.

He would hurry from his breakfast on Thursday mornings to watch the upset drill of the coast guard men, and would talk interminably with them about their self-bailing boats, embarrassing them greatly by suggesting improvements that theoretically were better. And they, knowing little about theory, were quite unable to discuss the

matter with him or to understand his point of view. Ruth, meanwhile, much amused, would stand around, waiting until he deigned to take her away.

This was from no discourtesy upon his part. He simply thought she was as much interested as was he. That was a part of his straightforward nature—one could not blame him for it. It was the mainstay of his character in other ways. It was the thing, for instance, that would have made him a possible choice, did all this friendly exchange of information serve in his case for love-making.

And her understanding mind had long since made certain that it did serve for love-making. The importance he gave to all her minor whims and preferences, the unknowing way he adopted for his own her tricks of phraseology, the restlessness that came over him did she enter the room where he was talking to someone else and the unconsciousness with which he shaped his life to fit in with hers, made her more sure of his intentions than she could have been of another man's had he told her in so many words.

Could a woman's romantic soul be satisfied with such a manifestation of love? Two years ago she had asked herself that question, thinking that she

required ardor and impetuosity. But long familiarity with the lack of it had moulded her spirit into considering the inward and spiritual grace and dispensing with the outward and visible sign. Long deliberation had convinced her that it was not cavalier grace and adoration that was necessary for happiness in the years to come, but staunchness of purpose and stoutness of heart. Her life was to be a long life; and a man with a conscience and a will to do right first of all, however unornamental and prosaic such a combination might be, would be a bulwark and a source of contentment to her as long as she lived.

It is difficult for a girl, having always before her the problem of marrying herself to the best and most satisfactory man, to decide whether love consists of acquiescence or of desire—whether marriage is a responsibility for the remaining half of one's life and for future generations, or whether it is simply the duty of following the flame in one's heart. If it were acquiescence and careful planning for the future, Richard Roth fulfilled her specifications. But as to whether her heart would acquiesce to this ruling, she did not promise herself. In fact she always considered the day on which she must decide as far away. When it therefore came, she found herself not at all ready.

Naturally the soul of the man chose eight o'clock in the morning as the time to discuss this matter. A leaden sky hung over a leaden sea. All the world was a gray monotone—and a dismal east wind heavy with rain blew across the sands.

"Ruth," said he, "I will be twenty-six years old in October. The board of trustees have made me, as you know, a full professor with a salary of three thousand dollars a year. The time has come for me to consider my future life. My prospects entitle me to make a proposal of marriage to a girl, knowing that I can fulfill my obligations in the matter. In addition to this, neither of us can be blind to the fact that the time has come for you to consider your future life. You cannot go on and on being a mere employee in an office. Greater things are required of you. Your happiness requires that you have a home of your own."

He paused and, earnest but unpicturesque, leaned intently forward, his elbows on his knees and his hands tightly clasped, as was his custom when greatly concerned.

"Here are two lives, whose future is as yet unprovided for. Let us join them together. I will do everything in the world to make you happy.

You will make my life a paradise, of which I am unable to give adequate expression."

He stopped then, having said everything. And with his silence came the realization that she must reply. But how could she reply? Until that moment she had thought that her mind was open upon that question. But as she looked at him, in spite of the kindliness in her heart toward him, she felt the conviction rising stronger and stronger within her that, straightforward and true though he was, she did not want him for a husband.

"I cannot say 'Yes' to that," she answered.

"Is there anyone else?" he demanded, with a certain wistfulness.

Was there anyone else! Her unexpected certainty that she did not want this man gave her cause for reflection.

Did it mean a miraculous presentment of the coming of another man, more congenial than he? Did it mean simply a sudden realization that her soul and his did not fit? Or did it mean that she had already made a comparison that eliminated him? Not many men dotted her horizon, but she would have been forced to admit that the only place to which her mind turned was to the dia-

mond-shaped pin that lay in a tiny box in her trunk. A treasure that, but it meant nothing but a memory of a pleasant moment—having nothing to do with the serious things of life. It was a symbol of the past and not of the future.

"There is no other man," she replied, thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XX

THE DISTURBING PERSON

The following Monday morning she sat again at her desk, experiencing a blended feeling of regret and pleasure at her return. When her employer entered the door, a trifle ahead of his usual time, she rose immediately to meet him as if she were receiving a guest in her own house. The firm clasp of his hand and his boyish laugh were pleasant welcome. She flushed under his gaze.

"It has been a long while," he exclaimed, "since I have seen you, but I should have known you anywhere."

"It has been only a week," she reminded him.

"Then never tell me a week isn't a long time. You cannot picture what a dismal office this has been. Even the book agents refused to stay."

He entered his inner office and found his mail arranged upon his desk as she had always arranged it. He called through the open door to express his satisfaction at seeing his desk in order again. Every time she turned to the filing case, she could

see him leaning back in his chair, reading his letters and drumming idly upon the arm of his chair. When he called her in he seated her as usual in his own chair and walking up and down, dictated rapidly, apparently unconscious of her presence—except when he would say "Is *contingency* the word I want?" and she would reply "No." "Very good, use the right word." And on would go the dictation. It was all familiar and homelike, as if she had been away but a day.

That much of her return was pleasant. The rest was not. The street outside was hot—with no ocean breeze to move the humid air. The asphalt paving was unpleasantly like the sandy beach in that she could feel her shoes sinking into it as she walked. The lunch room was full of uncomfortable people, getting some small relief from sitting under the electric fans. Ruth was looking doubtfully around in the hope of finding a table for herself, when she was suddenly confronted by Roth's homely, smiling face.

"Just in time," he exclaimed, reaching down and grasping her hand. "My sister is over here. We have been talking about you and wondering if you were coming."

"It was like crossing the Sahara."

She followed him to the table where his sister

was, and seated herself in the chair he pulled out for her.

"My dear Alice," she said, "why do you venture out in such heat."

"Shopping. Besides, I had to superintend the purchase of a suit of clothes for Richard. That is my duty—since he will not get a wife." She glanced quickly at the girl opposite, as if to catch her expression.

"Richard," exclaimed Ruth, reprovingly, "you are old enough to buy your own clothes."

"Is that the verdict? In the future, then, I shall do so."

Ruth turned to Mrs. Bullard. "How is the house coming on?"

"It is not coming on," replied the other quietly.

Richard broke in.

"What do you think," he exclaimed, "of a reputable company that would sell stock to its employees under the assumption that they were to participate in any increase in value, and then when the stock had gone up seventy-five dollars a share, announce that the company could not deliver it, but that simply the purchase money would be returned?"

"But I don't understand. Wasn't there an agreement?"

"The agreement had a loophole in it. It now develops that the company had no right to purchase and redistribute the stock without the consent of a certain third party. Is that the idea, Alice?"

"I think so. It is a little vague to us all. But there is a man who has a technical claim. It seems that instead of presenting it at the time and having everything adjusted, he played a trick on the company. He waited until the stock went up, and then brought his claim for all the increase." Mrs. Bullard's lip quivered, and she laughed to cover a desire to cry. "That means all the money we thought we had made is gone."

"But he can't get it, can he?" Ruth demanded, indignantly.

The other nodded. "The employees hired a lawyer who said the man's claim is good."

"And all your work and struggle was for nothing?"

"Almost. We may possibly get a third of the increase."

"But the house?"

"No house," said Mrs. Bullard, smiling bravely.

The color rose to Ruth's cheeks, and anger shone in her eyes. "To think," she exclaimed, "that such a man should be allowed to live. In

order to amass a large sum of money for himself he squeezes it penny by penny from poor people—who had earned it by struggle and privation he never dreamed of."

Roth glanced at her with admiration. "Exactly!" he exclaimed, fervently.

"Thank you, Ruth, my dear," said the other woman. "If your words could only change the situation!"

Ruth was so full of sympathy for the misfortune that had befallen her friends that she went back to her office determined to tell William Spade about it and ask him if there were not something he could suggest that could be done to help them out of their difficulty. It surprised her to think that he should be the man to whom she voluntarily turned for help. But, she reflected with a feeling of pride, he was a man of many resources and many friends. In spite of the patronizing way she sometimes looked upon his youthful self-confidence and his faith in his good fortune, she knew from working with him day by day that he was a person of unusual capability and that his business associates considered him so. And it was a pleasure for her to believe this.

He did not come into the office, however, until late in the afternoon, and then so engrossed in an

application from someone for a large loan that it would have been impossible for her to distract his attention from it. He asked her if she would mind staying a little later, as it was important that several long letters be written that night. The work of looking up the information he required, however, took longer than he had anticipated, and it was nearly seven o'clock when the letters were finally written.

"I get so absorbed," he exclaimed, contritely. "I had no right to keep you here so late."

She assured him that she did not mind. He read through the letters, and signed them.

"You will be too late for your dinner at home," he said. "Would you consider dining down town with me?"

"Not very long," she replied, smiling.

He looked at her intently. "Don't keep me in suspense. Does that mean yes or no?"

"I'm very hungry."

He lifted his hat from its peg. "That is enough. I can't see anyone starve. Let's hurry."

She got her own hat and stood before the mirror.

"But, Mr. Spade, I—"

"Do you always call me that?" he demanded.

"At the seashore I did not call you anything," she confessed.

"My name, you know, is William. Diminutive for use of all Dunbars—'Billy.' "

She eyed her hat critically in the glass and pushed a pin carefully into its place.

"All right, Billy," she said, suddenly, with a dazzling smile. "I say hurry."

It had been fifteen years since she had called him by his Christian name. The lightness with which she did it belied the interest she felt in the act. In its newness it had the breath-taking forwardness of a term of endearment—and she suffered a corresponding embarrassment.

"Aren't you going to be ashamed," she asked, as they waited at the elevator, "to take me to dinner in a shirtwaist and skirt?"

"No, indeed," he replied, earnestly, "if you made yourself any better looking than you are right now someone would take you away from me."

She met his smiling eyes and found in them the disturbing evidence of pride in her. That he should be satisfied with her and openly show his admiration for her were things she ought naturally to have taken as a matter of course. To inspire this state of mind was what her good looks were

for. But instead of complacent contentment, she felt a hot glow of pleasure. She turned from him to adjust a perfectly setting hat by her reflection in the glass of the door, humming softly to herself. Then she glanced at him quickly to see if he were still looking at her and, true daughter of Eve, experienced a disproportionate serenity from finding that he was.

As for her companion, he was not serene. As he looked at her standing there beside him making mysterious yet strangely graceful adjustments to her toque or bonnet, or turban or csaco, or whatever it was, he found his tranquillity greatly disturbed. Her sudden falling into a mood of coquetry after a day of seriousness and application was more than a pleasure to him. It seemed to touch a hidden spring in his mind and to guide on, in a direction that promised to be alluringly more pleasant.

And yet he was disturbed. Tentatively and indirectly, but with no chance for mistake as to his meaning, he had on several occasions offered himself to another woman, who now felt herself entitled to take him whenever the spirit moved her. The feline element in this woman had caused her to spend long hours of patient watching and tireless maneuvering to secure the admiration from

him that to her was equivalent to love and, having at last secured it, she held it between her velvet paws, unwilling to destroy the pleasure of the game by seizing it. And he, having expended much mental effort in making himself appear worth catching, had long ago decided that he had but to wait the crucial moment and the velvet paws would drag him into riches and power.

And meanwhile he was permitting himself to be dazzled by this girl who alluringly adjusted her rose-decked toque on her red-brown hair. A man's life was a complicated thing. It was like an artist sketching a sunset. When his colors were mixed and his plan laid, the scene changed and those colors and that plan were useless. So a man strives and strives for something until it is within his grasp and then finds that thing no longer fits his desires.

William had laid his plan and striven and made his offer. Then the intervention of this disturbing person. Polygamous impulse it was for him to be conscious of the shade of that hair or botanically to classify the flowers on that hat! He had restricted himself to the consideration of other tresses and other roses. As that fact was impressed on him, he became conscious that he did not love the woman to whom he had offered himself.

A bitter thought it was. And yet his sense of honor—his gentleman's sense of honor that had permitted him to seek the girl for the power that lay in her hands—made him aware that his offer bound him to her until he was released. Until the return of his stenographer that day from her seemingly long absence and his realization of the difference her presence made to him, he had not been aware that this problem would arise in his life. Yet here was the problem and also the solution his sense of decency provided for him.

As they sat at the table later—a table showy with linen and silver and cut flowers—he considered her thoughtfully, wondering what his course of action toward her should be. It would be unpleasant and rude and unfair to her to eliminate his recently born friendship for her and return to his former formal business relations. It would be unfair to himself to permit the friendliness to continue.

"It isn't complimentary for you to think business when you are dining with me," she said.

"What I was thinking was more than complimentary to you."

" 'More than'?" she repeated, derisively. "Didn't you mean to say 'complimentary is not the word'?"

"Perhaps I did," he replied, seriously. "I could substitute a better word. I was thinking of a multitude of things that concerned you. If I were to tell you it might spoil all that becoming sense of humility that sits upon you like a garment."

She smiled at his figure of speech, but curiosity started an agency in her mind skimming over various possible thoughts that might have been in his head and wondering which of them it was. She was burning to ask more about it, but the seriousness of his speech warned her that some complication, in which she was vaguely concerned, was occupying his attention and that it would be showing undue eagerness to ask. But the Paul Pry in her was deliciously piqued.

Thus so many things of an intimately personal nature occupied her attention that, although an unusual opportunity had offered itself, it did not occur to her to ask his advice upon the subject that had so engrossed her earlier in the day. Mrs. Bullard and the Old Dominion Steel Company did not cross her mind until long after he had left her. And even then the memory of many things, apparently more intimately concerned with William Spade, dimmed the importance of that topic.

CHAPTER XXI

"I AM THE MAN"

In the part of the evening that followed his leaving Ruth, the mind of William Spade was busy. He realized that the girl had made a place for herself in his mind from which it would be difficult to dismiss her. But a change in his attitude had to be made—and had to be made immediately.

The situation pointed to but one thing. He must make Sara Barclay decide what was her attitude toward him. It was an unpleasant task. His ambition to step into power by way of marriage had dimmed somewhat by now—since he had found there was more than one woman in the world. It is a pleasant thought to marry a beautiful girl and know that wealth and position and power go with her as a perquisite. But it is no pleasant thought to marry the wealth and position and know that in doing so you must take the girl, whether you want to or not. And this the more

so, as William had begun to feel, despite his Consolidated fiasco—which he regarded as a mere misfortune—that he would be able to get the wealth and position he needed in a way that was much better than marrying it.

However, his sense of honor and decency—the puny virtues of the mind prized by the people with whom he was thrown—pointed the way. He was willing to make the sacrifice since he felt that was the way a gentleman would of necessity comport himself. Therefore, he called up Sara Barclay on the long distance telephone, and, making a pretence of business in Boston, announced that on the following afternoon he would, if convenient, make a fleeting call upon her—between trains, as it were. This was satisfactory to her. William had the additional pleasure of conversing for a few moments with Warburton, who was then visiting Sara.

He wrote a note to Ruth at his office saying he would be back in a few days, and took the midnight train. It was an unexpected setting that was provided for his interview with Sara. He was met at the station by a big automobile in the rear seat of which sat Sara, very lovely and composed, her hands folded in her lap and a sweet smile upon her lips. Warburton, who had been

sitting beside her, got out as soon as he saw William and came to meet him.

This was the party that drove home, Sara in the middle of the seat, as pretty and contented as a picture on a valentine, and a man upon either side of her. William noticed an unusual excitement in the other man's manner which he hardly attributed to the simple pleasure of his arrival on the scene. He himself, who had come upon the business that would affect his whole future life, was as calm as was Sara. And, strangely enough, the business was broached and settled upon that very drive.

"We have a piece of great news for you, Billy," Sara said, at the end of a convenient pause. William was quick to catch in her tone a hint that this was something she had prepared to say at this time. She was looking unconcernedly ahead of her, but when she felt his eyes upon her, she turned and smiled brightly. He decided that it was something that would concern him and put on what might have been called a poker face.

"Let's have it quickly," he said, pleasantly.

She gave it to him quickly—as though she had rolled it up into as few words as possible and thrown it at him suddenly, for the purpose of

noting what his emotions would be upon hearing it.

"I am going to marry Louis," she observed, touching Warburton lightly on the sleeve. Her words had in them a studied lack of expression, but her eyes were full upon him. But if she were looking, or hoping, for a sign of regret, she saw none.

"Bless you both, my children," he exclaimed. "And I shall be the first to kiss the bride."

Whereupon, to her intense surprise, he leaned forward and kissed her full upon the mouth. For once in her life she almost lost her composure.

"Billy, you devil," she exclaimed. "You've ruined my make-up."

William's only regret, however, was that he might have seemed entirely too joyous. In the rôle of a rejected suitor he should at least have drawn one long face.

"At one time I had high hopes you would win," Sara said, during the course of the afternoon. "You are so much better looking and make so much more show than Louis does—and that counts so in a husband."

The long ride home was a joyful one. William Spade was unfettered and a free agent. He could

not help seeing, however, that the engagement of Sara Barclay to another man would make a change in his life. It would lower his prestige in the eyes of certain people. He would lose his right to the title of the Fortunate Youth. This was not without its pang of bitterness. And the large possibility which hinged upon his marriage to Sara—that he would have the opportunity one day to take over control of the whole Barclay system, which would make him one of the foremost financiers of the country—was gone past recall. He was both sorry and glad for that—sorry because he had permitted it to become a castle in the air, glad because he did not wish it to be said about him that he had attained success by marrying into it.

As a man exercising a new prerogative, immediately upon his arrival in Washington, he called up Ruth Dunbar on the telephone. He had the right, without question, to see her, and he was impatient to exercise it. It was a new and luxurious sensation—deliberately to arrange a time to see her, with the frank acknowledgment that it was solely for the comfort and pleasure of seeing her. At such other times as he had seen her, with the exception of the time at the seashore, which was a different atmosphere, it had been the result of

accident or of their business relations with each other.

She, too, realized the change, although she did not understand that he was exercising a new prerogative. She was more surprised and impressed by the fact that he had called her up immediately upon his arrival in the city. When she had hung up the telephone receiver and was still sitting thoughtfully at the table upon which the instrument rested, she wondered that she should have felt that it made a difference whether he called her up immediately upon his arrival or not.

As she turned her glance inwards upon herself, she was surprised at finding her heart registering elation over an incident so trivial. She seemed to be looking upon another woman—a woman with unusual and unexplained emotions.

Naturally there was a feeling of loyalty toward William Spade in her heart, a very certain admiration for his ability and, lately, an unexpected congeniality between the man and herself. But this did not account for any quickening of the pulse, or for any sudden blitheness of spirit that followed the realization that she was the first person he had thought of on coming home.

In view of the fact that she had long ago decided that his life was entirely unrelated to her

and that the principles and aims and the outlook upon the world which he possessed were, to her understanding, distorted and unworthy, this sensitive response to a sign in him of preference for her was unreasonable.

The only defense it had was that she felt her congeniality with him must be the result of a development in his character. She placed great importance upon the fact that some business reverse had had a sobering influence upon him, and she was willing to believe that it would induce in him a thoughtfulness and a consideration for others in misfortune that would make him less eager to distort his principles to conform with his headlong desire for success.

She believed that his hot enthusiasm to conquer at any price had greatly cooled. She believed that there must have been a mellowing influence at work in him or she would not have found herself drawn toward him. It seemed unreasonable to suppose that his character should have undergone a transformation in so short a time; but she found herself believing that it had. Rose-glasses they were that she wore, making her attempt to ascribe to that transcendent feeling in her heart a valid reason, whereas no valid reason could be ascribed to it. Any joy she felt in the fact that

he was alive was not the result of plan upon her part.

She did not realize, or at least not at that moment, that personal charm was not a thing that depended for its existence upon merit and well-doing. She supposed that the fact that he had entered, a *persona grata*, into her heart must be proof of his worthiness. She seemed to feel that a higher power than her own human preference had decided the problem for her, and, passing upon his credentials, had held open the door of her heart to him, whether she would or not.

She did not quite understand herself, nor the brighter eyes that shone back to her from the face she saw in her mirror. But she was not inquiring into that. She was thinking rather that William Spade liked her white short-sleeved dress. She was thinking that her arms were round and smooth —and was glad that they were. She was thinking that her hair looked better lower upon her neck and, having thus thought, took it down and arranged it in that manner.

She sat in a big chair by her window, watching through the trees the fading glow of the sky. In her lap lay the silk scarf—upon her breast the pin with which to fasten it. Under the folds that held the pin her heart murmured an impatient

prelude—like the tuning of strings which brings nearer, while it still seems to make far off, the first music of the orchestra.

And when he came she did not move. She saw the automobile draw up before the door. The impatience was gone. Her young brother entered the room to announce that Spade had come. She nodded, rising hastily to her feet as though it had just occurred to her that she was to go. One glance she gave to her mirror and then ran lightly and swiftly down the stairs.

A new self-consciousness made her merely glance at him—a glance that paused but for a moment to verify his eyes and smile—and then turn quickly away, to loose a fictitious entanglement between her scarf and the clasp at her waist. His laugh was just a trifle strained, as though he too were covering up a consciousness of his own. They were alike in this—for each of them the tuning of the violins had stopped and they stood listening to the full orchestra.

She scarcely knew where they drove that night. A wide white ribbon of road rolled under them. Before them in the western sky hung the young moon, depending by an invisible thread as from a single star above it. It was a mark of unusual

mental disturbance in him that he noticed this effort of nature.

They turned about presently. Beside them ran the quiet river. In place of the thin moon the beacon now before them was the top of the tall pointed Monument, luminous in a shaft of light and seeming like a snow-capped mountain whose peak shone against the sky. The evening breeze carried to them the strains of the waltz a distant band played. She caught the familiar air and hummed it softly. It was as if they were in some way detached from the world; and all its scenery and its people were simply a background, more or less indistinct. Over there, across the now intervening finger of the Potomac, lay a huge piece of stage artifice—a panorama of a city, alight and alive, upon which she could pick out landmarks as if it were a map and not a real city. The dark bulk of the War College, lightless and grim, slumbered, like the evil of blood and carnage it typified, in menacing quiet.

The splendor of the dark world kindled her imagination. The power of the far-stretching night induced in her a realization of the heroic structure of the world and with that, strangely enough, of the heroic structure of the yearning in

her heart—a yearning as mysterious and as beautiful as the night itself.

"Do you realize," she asked, "what a spectacle has been arranged for us to drive through?"

"Is it just for us?" he demanded.

"Doesn't it seem so?"

He paused for a moment as if the simple idea had rearranged his conception of the whole matter. "It does," he agreed. "And it's glorious." His commendation was given with a new and pleasant conviction of ownership—of joint ownership.

"What is there, I wonder, about the dark," she asked thoughtfully, "that makes it so appealing?"

"It is big and powerful," he replied, immediately. His definition of universal appeal!

He was himself in a mood of bigness and power. He felt a pleasant congeniality with the awe-inspiring majesty of the night. He was a man writ large, for whom Providence and the high gods had arranged the course of events fortunately, so that the world seemed to belong to him. He was free and unfettered and, as he looked at the alluring figure beside him, white-clad ankles languidly crossed, well-shaped hands clasped contentedly in her lap, red-brown hair blown by the breeze so that when he leaned toward her a strand of it

brushed his face, she seemed almost to belong to him. A vision of a fair land opened out before him.

"We were speaking of power," she said, presently; "are you, by any chance, an influential person?"

He looked at her searchingly. "Intermittently," he replied.

"Might a humble stenographer consult you then upon a matter of importance?"

"In a light and airy manner—to match the impudence in her eyes?"

"No. Seriously." She laughed softly, and, raising her face to him, added in a low tone, "With becoming deference."

He saw the gleam in her eye—part amusement and part the usual confidence in his ability, which she never attempted to conceal. His heart accelerated its beat and the blood ran hot through him. He would have taken her in his arms then had he followed his impulse.

"You would not have said that," he asserted, his eyes upon her, "had you not been so sure."

"Of what?"

"Of your own power."

The blood rose to her face, but the darkness hid the flush from him. She had no reply for his

speech. Instead she waited, almost painfully, wondering if he would say more. Then they both remembered that she was asking his advice upon a question. She spoke and, unknowing, steered their frail craft out of smooth harbor into turbulent seas.

"I have a friend in trouble," she said. "She and her husband, by hard work and great self-denial, had earned what was for them a large sum of money—earned it honestly and fairly; and then some powerful outside person—after having let them, in common with a hundred others, struggle to accumulate this, risking their last penny to do it—came forward with a legal quibble for which they were entirely unprepared, took away the money and left them with a mere pittance."

She paused, and something of the gravity in his face seemed to warn her that her craft was no longer in harbor. His mouth was drawn tight, and his eye was fixed upon the road ahead.

"Are they—these friends of yours—employees of any of the war order firms?" he asked.

"Why, yes," she replied. "But why attempt to tell you things? You know everything, don't you?"

A discomfort that he did not understand came

over him. It was no pricking of conscience, but a keen disappointment that he must align himself against her, and sever with a stroke a bond that had hardly been formed.

"I want your help—" she began.

But he was scarcely listening. The car slowed down until the hand on the dial pointed to an unaccustomed figure.

"Was it—was the company the Old Dominion Steel Company?"

This time she showed no pleasure in his knowledge. A fear, a disconcerting fear wedged its way into her mind.

"Yes," she replied—and listened to the unquiet beating of her heart.

He drew a long breath.

"Then," he said, resolutely, "I am the man who is taking the money you speak of."

For a moment it seemed as if neither of them breathed. Then he set his teeth and the car shot forward. Unconsciously she drew away from him. The night, whose charm had but a moment ago stirred the chords of her heart, became a mere sullen darkness. She stared unseeing at the road. She listened with dulled ears to the throb of the engine. And when she saw again

the reflection of the small moon upon the water, she remembered that a short time before it had given her pleasure.

With a feeling of bitterness she realized that she had drawn away from him—as from something repulsive. It was punishment to her to treat him thus, for the place he had formed for himself in her regard had clothed him with a certain sanctity. And what is worse than a broken god?

If in her disappointment there was any element of pity, it was not for herself—but rather for him. No separate emotions, however, distinguished themselves in her benumbed mind. She was not thinking. No words came to her lips to say the reply of some sort she thought she would have made ere this.

That reply was never made. The car rolled on. If it was reproach she wished to convey to him, she said no word of it. If it was disappointment, if it was contempt, if it was anger, he never knew it. Nor did she pause to gather up those incidental emotions and catalogue them in her mind. The tragedy was that the dream was shattered. She did not care where the pieces had fallen. The pathos of it was that he had become so valueless in her perspective that her mind had

not the energy to think toward him reproach or indignation.

For his part, having no word from her, he chose the nearest way to her house, and made the big car speed along the quiet streets. It seemed neither long nor short to her. She scarcely knew what streets they traversed. Until presently they drew up before her door.

A sudden fear of being alone seized her. She did not want to be with him, yet she did not want him to leave her. Mentally and bodily she was lonely. In her unsettled mind his very presence, which was obnoxious to her, was still a comfort.

With a grave courtesy he held out his hand. She put hers—a cold hand it was—into it and instantly withdrew it.

"Good night," he said.

Her voice sounded strange and far away.

"Good-bye."

And it was good-bye, she felt in her heart.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RECKONING

As she undressed that night, her mind began to recover from the first shock of the blow it had received—and she began to think about things in a more connected way. It was a limping and halting analysis that she made, an analysis that paused ever and again to let pass on a wave of self-pity. Had her body been beaten it could not have been more painful than this smarting of her punished spirit.

In her own mind she had capitulated to this man as surely as if they had crossed the brink on which they had hovered and had told him in so many words. And he had turned out to be one who stole—yes, that was the word—under the guise of taking his own! It was a fresh blow upon her embittered soul each time she admitted the crime and the hypocrisy that covered it up.

She wondered that she had not burst out in a tirade of anger against him. She wondered, now, when she was exposing herself to her own scorn-

ful and humiliating contempt, that she found in her mind no contempt for him. But she began to know soon that her disappointment and soreness of spirit were too strong within herself to blame him. He had followed his own course. She had thought that course had been leading on toward the path she believed was right and creditable for him to follow. Now that the sudden shock had informed her it was not such a path, no blame rested upon him for her disappointment—which was the bitter thing she had now to bear.

She had known before that his life was laid in places which did not tend to make his path as straight as she would have wished it to be. He had been educated in a college where the slogan had been to get through, without taking into consideration whether he was morally satisfying the requirements. One of the strongest principles this life had imprinted upon him was to get as much as possible in return for as little effort as possible. He had had no education there—nor since—to teach him that the most valuable achievements are those earned by hard work and striving. That was a prosaic idea; and the people he had mingled with since he left college knew of no crime worse than being prosaic. They had

characterized as prosaic almost all the homely sentiments and virtues. Religion, faith, diligence, self-sacrifice, charity, consideration for the wants and rights of their fellow men they regarded as quixotic, and subscribed to only their broadest and most spectacular aspect.

What chance to lead an unselfish life had a man whose soul had been veneered over with such ideas? What chance was there that such a man, as he took each step, would watch the effect of it upon others—instead of simply upon himself?

No, she did not blame him. He was too remote from her to blame. She could not think of him as having a personal relation with her, for that brought too vividly to her the remembrance of how far she had let that personal relationship proceed.

She had just laid upon her bureau the enamelled gold pin that belonged to him—with a mixture of distaste and tenderness. Everything that reminded her of him was infinitely valuable in that it was symbolic of a dream of happiness, and abhorrent in that it reminded her of her shame because that dream was no longer possible.

There was a five line note in her desk from him, treasured as the only personal message he had ever written her. On the wall hung the lit-

tle cheap picture of Dante and Beatrice he had given her. On the bed lay the white dress he liked. The gold pin she would send back to him, but these three things were her own—the only remembrances of her completed romance. Pathetically inadequate! A few written words, a tiny picture and a white dress!

Then her pity for herself overwhelmed her. Hot tears welled up in her eyes and ran down her cheeks. Hot tears dropped upon the white dress as she hung it in the closet, from which it would never again be taken for him. Hot tears dropped upon Dante and Beatrice as she removed them from their place upon the wall and, deep under the white folds in the drawer of her bureau, buried them. It was as if in them she were burying life and hope. Hot tears blinded her as she tore the note across and again across and laid the mangled thing in the basket, with a gesture that in spite of her determined face, could not but be gentle. For each rift of that paper had been as a rift in her own heart.

"Oh, you coward!" she cried, with withering contempt, to her reflection in the glass. "To cry!"

But the image in the glass, unconvinced, continued to weep. Brave resolutions not to lament

do not go into effect so soon. She might summon all the power of her will and say "I will be calm," but she could not be until all the mysterious involuntary impulses and emotions and forces within her were calm.

Far off the bells chimed musically the quarter-hour. She darkened her room and, in her ribboned gown, looked out upon the night, her white arms and neck gleaming in the reflected light from the street. No call of sleep urged her to the bed behind her. She felt that she would hear the musical bells many a time before she slept.

The dismal fact was that she had loved this man. Her active mind, eager to continue her punishment, kept this diligently before her; and, as if it enjoyed finding new and entertaining ways of applying the scourge, reminded her constantly that, having loved him, she must see him daily and, seeing him, remember that she had loved him. A shamed flush rose to her face at the realization of it. With the tumult fresh in her breast could she treat him with the calmness and ease that would cover up the effects of the storm he had caused? For she would as soon now he saw her naked body as her naked soul.

Many a time she heard the quarter-hours chime

that night as she lay upon a torrid pillow. Their soothing, musical tones, like far-off bells heard in pleasant dreams, spoke to her of peace and quiet, which came to her not at all. Toward morning she slept fitfully—and awoke to the realization that here was the beginning of day—a hard day.

She must meet him. The hard and fast schedule of her life prescribed the course of her day and at certain times she must be in certain places. She could not vary that course and avoid him. And when she met him she must make it clear to him that their ways were too divergent for her to devote more of her time to the cultivation of his friendship. At the same time she must let him see that she did not presume to be his judge; and conceal from him the fact that kept forcing itself so near the surface that she felt all the people on the street could see and understand it—that the longing in her made it impossible that she should be anything else but his judge.

She must frown and be firm lest he think his erring was of too little importance to her; and she must smile and be light-hearted lest he know it was too great.

She waited at her desk, absolutely still and idle, awaiting his coming—like a culprit listen-

ing for the step of her executioner. Her hands, tightly clasped in her lap, were moist with excitement. The forty-five minutes was many hours long. And then when she felt that she could stand the strain not a moment longer, she heard his familiar step upon the tile floor of the corridor without.

Like an actress taking position for the rise of the curtain, she rose from her chair. What Spade saw when he entered was an easy, nonchalant figure, at the drawer of the filing case, who gave him a pleasant smile over her shoulder. He returned it in kind, giving no sign of the wonder that was in his mind, and passed on into his inner office. He too sat quiet, reading without comprehending the thin sheaf of mail that lay before him. For he knew too that something had to be done, and done soon—something to let him know where he stood and where she stood. He was thinking how he could best accomplish this, when he looked up and found her beside him, holding an unimportant letter, about which she asked an unimportant question, which he answered at random and could not a moment later have remembered what he had said. Nor could she.

He knew that she must not leave that room before he had had an understanding with her. So

engrossed was he with that idea that he did not stop to think whether the letter and the question were not on her part a mere excuse, and she herself as anxious as he to say her speech and stand again on firm ground. She sat down in the chair opposite him and with a haste so feverish that she was certain he would know, in spite of her, how great a stress of excitement she labored under, she unclasped his pin from her waist. He saw the intent of this act.

"Do you see this valuable jewel?" she asked, lightly, extending her open hand with the enamalled gold lying in it.

"It is very beautiful," he replied, trying not to think how alluringly soft was the palm in which it lay. He was quick to see the purpose of the interview, and believed from her lightness of manner that she was simply trying not to be too hard upon him. He somehow felt instinctively the uselessness of discussing the difference that lay between them. It was too fundamental. He saw from her one act and her one speech what course she had decided upon. And if she were trying not to be too hard upon him, he would try not to be hard upon her.

Therefore he asked, "Is it an heirloom?" with a lightness to match her own.

"No, it is modern."

"A device, no doubt," he said, idly drawing upon his blotter, "to fasten some gossamer thinness about one's shoulders in the interests of warmth."

She felt a certain tingling in her cheeks at the memory those words brought up, but she met his lifted eyes calmly.

"It has been used for that purpose. I am only the custodian of it—a position," she added, slowly, "of trust and honor. But whose responsibility rests heavily upon me. I wish the owner to have it."

He rose from his chair and strode twice up and down the room. She rose also. When she moved, he stopped where he was. She walked with an affectation of carelessness to the corner of the room where hung his Norfolk coat.

"The pin," she said calmly, "I shall fasten with my own hand upon your coat."

He watched the operation in silence. She turned to him with a smile. What she had meant to say was simply that she had been away from her work too long and must return. What she did say, her voice faltering over the three words, was, "Treasure it always." And then she hur-

ried from the room, lest her trembling lips betray her.

He heard the keys of her typewriter clicking, with a deceiving air of industry. But what her hands wrote was "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country. Now is the time—" and so on, over and over and over again, with transposed letters, with spaces where there should have been no spaces, and no spaces where there should have been spaces, and there was no health in it. She scarcely knew that she wrote it. And he, sitting at his desk, bored thoughtful holes into his blotter with his pencil. Until presently, as though hearing the oft-repeated call for the man whose aid was desired, he rose abruptly from his chair and entered the outer office.

An excited and feverish man he was, but grim of purpose. He snapped the catch upon the outer door, shutting out intruders. He had done this a few times before when he did not wish to be disturbed, and had apologized for it. He said nothing now, however, and paced up and down the room. Uncertainly she reached for her notebook.

"Ruth," he began, suddenly stopping where

he was in his march. Then he saw the note-book. "Don't take this down," he burst out. "I am proposing marriage to you."

A moment of aghast silence and then, their tightened nerves relaxing, they broke into uncontrolled laughter.

She had never thought that when the man she loved proposed to her, she would simply laugh. And yet that laugh brought them close together, as if there were no flaw in the perfect sympathy between them—and made doubly hard the task that lay before her.

"Ruth," he said, when they were rational again. "I insist upon your knowing that I love you. I think of you and want you every minute. When I found that there was no other obligation that—bound me, the revolving of the train wheels carrying me here was music all the way. Every view I saw of rivers and hills through the car windows, I wished you there to see also. Two nights ago when the sun set, I thought I had never seen the world so beautiful and I—needed only you to be with me."

Hard indeed he was making her task for her now. She was filled with pride because he felt thus toward her, because her influence had reached to him over a thousand miles and tinged the world

about him with thoughts of her. But it was a bitter sweetness—the momentary enjoyment of a blessing that was to be taken away.

"I think I understand," he said, gently, "what you think. I say what I have said mainly for your information—to keep the records straight, so to speak."

"I am more honored—and touched," she replied, struggling to control herself, "than I could ever explain to you."

He drew a long breath. As she sat there after she had said this, not looking at him at all, he knew how strongly, how passionately he wanted her. But he held himself in check.

"As for myself," he said, quietly, "I love you, and therefore I know that in your eyes I have been weighed in the balance and found wanting."

It was a brave thing to say, for in the balance that he judged himself by, he was not wanting. He was simply admitting that her decision upon this point could not be controverted. For the question now was not what he was, but what she thought he was.

Her face was pale, but she met his glance firmly. "That is true," she replied, with a courage equal to his own.

He resumed his walk. "This attitude of

yours," he said, "is not a thing I can understand. It is something above and beyond me. I seem to have wronged, unknowingly, people I never have seen and whose affairs have no direct connection with mine. And yet this accidental wrong on my part brands me and disgraces me."

She felt the note of bitterness in his words, and it stirred her to self-defense.

"Was your action," she asked, "to your mind absolutely straightforward, then?"

"You are confusing straightforward with honest," he accused.

"But the employees earned the money, and you did not," she exclaimed.

"They used their hands and not their eyes. I used my eyes and not my hands. That seems easy to you, and you therefore say I did not earn the money."

"I say," she exclaimed hotly, "that each of them by saving and scrimping accumulated a fortune—to them—a pittance to you. And you, by the exercise of a power not given to them, collected the pittances from them all to make a huge sum for yourself. You took the blood of their hearts."

His face turned gray, like that of a prisoner receiving sentence. He paused by the side of the

long table and stood with his hands pressed upon its surface, so that one looking closely could have seen that the ends of the fingers were white and bloodless.

"The question," he said in a moment, earnestly, yet in a voice calm and controlled, "is just how far I am my brother's keeper. Am I supposed to safeguard him against his own errors of judgment? Am I supposed to be responsible for his misdirected efforts?"

"Does that justification satisfy you?" she demanded quickly.

"I am not arguing with my conscience now," he replied. "I am speaking of a universal principle. I do not believe it is to any man's good that I lay in his lap the thing he has not earned. The fact that he has labored for it does not signify that he has earned it."

She passed her hand over her eyes in a baffled yet determined way. "The difference between right and wrong," she said, presently, "is one that I am not skillful enough to define. But in order to make yourself happy you have made a hundred unhappy. I cannot but think that is wrong."

He looked fixedly out of the window, his hands still resting on the table. It was as if he were trying to decide whether he should say what was

on his mind. His pride made him turn from any appearance of one in the wrong, defending himself.

"My father," he said at length, his glance still outside upon the blue sky and the white roaming clouds, "in all his transactions considered the case from the standpoint of the other man. He played the game with his own cards on the table, even if his opponents' were concealed. In this way he did himself incalculable injury and, as it turned out, put a premium on dishonesty. He is now a broken and disappointed man."

She looked at him wondering, realizing that, half unconscious of her, he had by some miracle opened to her sight a recess of his spirit that before she had not been permitted to view—a little alcove, she thought, of simplicity and sincerity.

"When my father invented a certain well-known device now universally used," he went on, "he discovered shortly after the patent was granted, in an old French engineering magazine a crude but quite similar apparatus described. As this would give grounds for the contention that his idea was not original and therefore not patentable, he felt it his duty to tell his partner of his discovery. And his partner, having the fact in his possession, had the patent annulled and

is now manufacturing the article himself. He is a millionaire and a successful man. My father is a discouraged man, with a record of nothing accomplished."

"But if he did what was right—?"

"He did what he thought was right," Spade corrected. "A person's conscience is a strange thing—it must be regulated like a watch. A time comes when it has to be set forward twenty-five or thirty years."

"The honesty," he went on, "of the old fashioned man who sold a cake of soap over the counter was a simple matter. Not so very long ago most of our commercial transactions were like that. Now our world is unbelievably complex. When a dollar comes to us we cannot say from whose hand it comes. In the case of the cake of soap, the purchaser was the ultimate individual concerned in the transaction. It was possible to know whether he was wronged or not. But in the maze of our business, no human power could guess all the ultimate individuals of each transaction, and consider whether they would be wronged. Such honesty could only accompany the omniscience of God Himself."

It was not merely plausible glibness. It was conviction. The insidious part of the influence

that worked upon him was that as each moral prop was withdrawn there was substituted in its place a self-convincing reason for its withdrawal. Each step backward was accompanied by a conviction that it was a step forward. The absorbing of each principle that made for the decadence of the nation was felt to be the absorbing of a principle made necessary by the expanding and reaching up of the nation.

Poor Ruth! As she looked at this earnest figure with his broad shoulders turned to her, conviction was far from her. She was helpless before his words, but they could not extinguish the faith within her that right was always right and wrong was always wrong.

"And because of what you say," she asked him, gently, "do we abolish honesty altogether?"

His jaw closed firmly. "We certainly amend it," he replied, "to fit the conditions that exist."

Truth unanswerable it was to him—heresy to her. It was well he still looked meditating out over the city, and did not see the bright film over her eyes. It hurt her like a physical pain—that speech. Amended honesty! With it there also seemed to be amended faith, amended charity, amended unselfishness, amended right and

amended wrong. The whole Word of God paraphrased for the sake of ease and convenience. As she looked at him through the mist of her tears, he was like a strayed sheep. Her tears were because she was not the shepherd that had the power to bring him back.

He saw, or felt, the tears then. In a moment he was standing over her, his hand upon her shoulder. "Don't you see," he pleaded, "I am right? I have followed my convictions. I have ordered my life as I know it ought to be ordered. Couldn't you consider that, and think of me as the man who wants you to be his wife?"

She sprang to her feet and retreated from him, both her hands clutching with vicelike grip the drapery over her heart.

"No!" she cried, with eyes now frankly streaming tears, "I could not think of you as my husband."

He gazed long and earnestly at her. Pity, admiration, longing, and an unquenchable desire to possess her overpowered his reserve. The glistening tears upon her cheeks loosed all his restraint.

"Tell me one thing," he exclaimed, hotly, impetuously, "you have talked theory to me. Could you in spite of that love me? Do you love me?"

He might have had reason to think she did. But he waited anxiously. And for her it was a bitter question. If a willingness to give up her life for him, to permit her whole existence to revolve about him, to consider his presence sunshine, and his absence darkness—if that were love, she loved him. But if it meant looking up to him, modelling her life upon his, marrying him—
She met his eyes with her own tear flooded ones —steadily.

"No," she said, unflinching, "I do not love you."

And held the gaze until his office door closed behind him.

CHAPTER XXIII

DISASTER

Twice that morning after the door had closed behind him was it opened again:—once when she entered to lay a telegram upon his desk—a desk unlittered with the signs of industry; and again when he came to ask her to telephone and have a stateroom reserved at Norfolk on the Merchants and Miners boat for Boston—not that he might not equally well have performed that duty himself on this occasion, but that habit was strong.

The telegram was a welcome thing. It was from a client he had recently seen in Boston, saying that if he could come there immediately, the deal they had discussed could be arranged. He cared little for the business, but it gave him an opportunity to be away from his office, where he had created a situation at present too tense for its two occupants to endure.

It seemed therefore, as if Providence had arranged this circumstance for him. Partly in order to give Time, the Healer, more space in which to apply at least first aid to the injured and partly

on account of the more agreeable and pleasant nature of the longer trip, he decided it would be advisable to go by boat rather than by train. This would be giving Ruth an opportunity to recover from the turmoil he knew he must have caused in her and to subjugate the embarrassment that would result from it, and, by the same act, give his own somewhat battered emotions several days of calm and solitude in which to recuperate.

Could he have foreseen the calm that was to result, he might have made other arrangements. For Destiny, the queer, capricious damsel, hates to have people prophesy as to her future acts. When one counts upon calm, she furnishes turmoil and when one counts upon turmoil she furnishes insipid calm.

Spade went by train to Norfolk, whence the boat was to leave at about sundown. The first evidences of turmoil came when he walked up the gang plank following a squad of people bearing the legend "Peace." But what is in a name? The dictionary's definition of that word is "calm and absence of strife." The banner must have referred to a different world, for the peace that followed it contained neither of these properties.

The clan that rallied round this guidon were inventors. They had invented a new religion,

and they were promoting it to the best of their ability. It did not develop in what way this religion was superior to other religions, except that by reason of having been designed and made to order to suit them, they were satisfied with it.

The boat seethed with them. At every stair and door, in every easy chair, on every couch and settee, to windward and to leeward, in sun and in shade, lolled and lounged or scurried restlessly about, like a plague of locusts, queer human people with white ribbons streaming from their bosoms on each of which was inscribed "Disciple." William followed the squeaking shoes of one of these individuals from one end of the boat to the other, impelled by a curiosity of long standing to know just what a disciple was like.

They ran rather extensively to patriarchs. The man with the complaining shoes whom William had followed, wore a venerable gray beard flowing down over his chest. At first William played with the thought that he was a detective and that this was his disguise. But the presence of other faces of similar design convinced him that this was the way the gentleman desired his face to look and that the beard concealed no sinister and underhand purpose.

The decks and the saloons resounded with the

buzzing occasioned by the social intercourse of these persons. William gazed in wonder at them. Difference in their sex, age, coloring and dress could not conceal the uncanny similarity that existed between them all, and differentiated them from average humans. It was evident that they were all laboring under the intoxication of an unaccustomed excitement—that this trip was to them an event which was to lend the color of romance to the remainder of their lives.

Therefore while their blue and white banner said "Peace," they wandered about in a most unpeaceful manner, like so many dipsomaniacs, keyed up to an unnatural hilarity. Intemperance in regard to steamboat journeys acts upon the unaccustomed like strong drink and they were all abnormally stimulated as a result of their overindulgence.

William thought there were a hundred of them, but it turned out later that there were but twenty-five, who made up in hilarity what they lacked in numbers. As he watched them chattering in disorderly joy together, he laughed aloud amidst the racket to think that he had taken this trip on account of the peaceful quiet of the ocean.

One of the disciples, filled with an instinct of friendliness toward the whole human race, sat

down beside him. "There are going to be great doings on this boat tonight," he volunteered, in a condescending way, as one who was to be in the thick and front of the fray. "There will be no sleep on board, I can promise that."

At this sweeping and thoroughly gratuitous guarantee of insomnia for all, William concealed what enthusiasm he might have felt.

"Going to stage a cabaret show?" he asked, mildly.

His companion appeared puzzled. "Just singing and some excellent addresses," he replied, a little uncertainly.

"No dancing?"

"Positively no, sir," replied the disciple, shocked.

"I think you are making a mistake there. The people naturally expect it."

"Dancing, sir, is part of the machinery of the Evil One. It brews wrong thoughts and leads on toward ruin."

"I have thought that about some of the dances. But it doesn't do to say so, you know."

"The Disciples of Peace are fearless in what they say. Our object is to purify the world."

"Well," responded William cautiously, "that is a very worthy object."

"My dear sir, it is the object for which the Divine One put us upon the earth. We must not shirk our duty."

"It is, however, a large undertaking."

"That is why we propose to do it. We do not wish to deal with small things."

"But wouldn't such an undertaking require some preparation?"

"None but the helping hand of the Lord."

William eyed the disciple curiously. "Are you," he asked, presently, "from Virginia?"

"I am from Suffolk, Virginia, sir."

"And you have travelled about considerably?"

The other moved uneasily in his chair. "I have been to Norfolk and Elizabeth City quite frequently. And some fifteen years ago I visited Richmond."

The young man said no more. It seemed part of the droll humor of fate that the people, usually, who set out to reform the world are those who have no knowledge of it. He could not laugh, however, at this. It touched him too closely—for had he not been recently judged by one who did not, in his estimation, understand.

He excused himself from the disciple presently and went out upon deck. It was now about time for the steamer to be heading out between

the capes, and he wished to see the last of the shore. But to his surprise he found that the dull threatening day had given way to fog, and the steamer was feeling her way slowly along, sending out raucous blasts from her whistle as warning to invisible ships behind the opaque walls of mist. The only intimation one had of shore was the roar of the unmusical fog-horns at Cape Henry, sounding not so much like anything as Gabriel's last trump, calling up sinful souls for judgment.

The diversion of watching the disappearing shore having been denied him, after taking a few turns up and down the untenanted deck and peering about on all sides to see nothing but leaden sea merging without line or break into leaden atmosphere and leaden atmosphere closing about them like a bell-jar and tantalizingly shutting them off from the world about them, he reentered the cabin and, noting signs and sounds of food in the dining room below, allowed himself to be persuaded that dinner was the only remaining form of diversion.

The dining room was full of disciples. He looked bewilderedly about him as he came down the steps, wondering if it would be better to retreat and come again when the excursionists had been fed or whether there was a place in a quiet

corner where he could dine in peace. In the midst of this dilemma he saw, like an oasis in the midst of a desert, a familiar face—the comforting, pleasant face of a friend. In a secluded part of the room, like a rose blooming in the midst of necessary and essential cabbages, sat Mrs. Carver. She rose joyously from her seat.

"Thank heaven," she said, "for a human companion."

She explained that she had been in Richmond and was going to Boston to meet her husband. William sat beside her and in her always pleasant company experienced a return of buoyant spirits.

After they had talked a long while and the dishes before them had been removed and the waiters were standing impatiently about wishing them gone, he explained a hypothetical case to her, which was a counterpart of his own deal with the Old Dominion Steel Company and asked her opinion upon its merits. Much thinking about it had made him wonder if his view could possibly have been distorted by his own desire that it should be right.

"Do you remember," she asked at length, ignoring the fact that this was supposed to be a hypothetical case, "that once, a long while ago,

I told you Sara Barclay and her kind would drag you down."

He gazed at her in astonishment.

"You have had to make money to keep in that stratum," she went on ruthlessly, "I know about that. The stratum is rotten, and the temptation is to consummate rotten transactions in order to stand upon its level."

He made a gesture of protest.

"I do not say your deal is rotten," she asserted, "but it is—debatable. It is the sort of thing the urge of the desire for wealth drives a man to undertake."

"You overestimate these things—" he began.

"Do you think," she demanded, "a nation whose foremost class is selfish and prodigal and pleasure-loving can continue to be a great and aspiring nation?"

"I think," he asserted, stoutly, "there is still an abundance of goodness and stability and earnestness in the country."

"Of course there is. But we are throwing it away. Why, the sturdy and thinking part of our country has become so impressed with the softening effect of our civilization, that thousands of men, rich and poor, have journeyed up to a little town in New York state to spend their vacations

and their money in learning a little soldiering—in order to do their part in bringing up the standard of the country. That is the biggest proof that there is something wrong."

He was silent.

"Your deal," she said, "is the result of the same influence. The result of easy living, easy spending, easy money-making. You are not going to see it now. It will take a hard jolt to open your eyes."

"I think so. I certainly do not see it now."

They left the dining room and ascended the stair to the upper deck. Half way up the flight he stopped. "Into what state of mind am I to be jolted?"

"Into a state of responsibility to the man on the street. Into a state of realizing that God is a power that protects you though you have done nothing to deserve it, and that you are in duty bound to protect others even when you think they have done nothing to deserve it."

"That is copy-book morality."

"Perhaps," was all she said.

Later on, as they sat unobserved in a corner of the upper saloon watching an overwrought prayer-meeting of the disciples, he called her attention to an old lady in the crowd—a placid, sweet-faced,

credulous old lady. It seemed that no evil thought could ever have crossed the threshold of her mind. She was listening with rapt attention to the speaker, drinking in every word and believing that his references to golden deeds and fellowship with God proved him a doer of such deeds and one who had some mysterious personal understanding with the Deity.

"Can't you construct her character complete just from looking at her?" William asked. "I think there are such in Heaven. But she is not a doer —and the world must have doers. Her goodness has no relation to life—for her circle is so small. She approaches the limit represented by the man chained to his chair for life—she can do no wrong. But a man active in the world and pressing the world's work cannot have his principles laid down for him by the onlookers of the contest —however sweet and unsoiled those onlookers may be."

"But she has a thing called faith," was his companion's comment.

Presently she looked at him inquisitively as though she would obtain in advance the answer to the question she was about to ask.

"Tell me," she said, "what brought doubts into your mind as to your Old Dominion transaction?"

"I had no doubts."

"But you consulted me. What made you do that?"

"I don't know."

"Was it a girl?" she shot at him.

A long pause. "Why, yes," he admitted, at length, "that was it. It was a girl."

"Not Sara Barclay, or one of her—advanced type?"

"No. You do not know her.

"She is," he added after a thoughtful pause, "not of the advanced type. She is reactionary. She belongs to a former generation."

"Nothing could be better," she exclaimed, unexpectedly. "The former generation is a good influence. My husband is a rock-ribbed Puritan. He has an ingrowing conscience. He has turned all my ideas backward."

"You are preaching retrogression?"

"We ought to go back until we get into the period where people are aspiring instead of satisfied, and where they accord common humdrum goodness its proper consideration."

"She does that," he replied absently.

Mrs. Carver laughed. "I see how your mind is running."

The disciples sang psalms and hymns and made

addresses and launched long prayers, which having been launched and having included all available objects in the animal and vegetable kingdom, the weather, the crops, the government of the broad land, the welfare of its elected officers, the welfare of foreign nations, the comfort of the sick, the health of babies and the future of all criminals, soon obtained a momentum that was difficult to stop, and the prayer carried its author on and on, hoping every moment for inspiration to stop it—until finally, no inspiration appearing, he simply said "Amen" at the end of a sentence, and sat down dazed and worn out, like Mazeppa at the end of his wild ride.

Midnight approached, and the religious enthusiasm showed no sign of flagging. At length a fat, puffing man, clad in pink pajamas, his hair standing up on end from hours of restless turning on his pillow, appeared at the side of the room—a disturbing note rendered doubly so by the shocking impropriety of his costume—and shouted, not in the soft tones of politeness, but with rough uncouthness:

"Say, when are you psalm-singers going to let honest people sleep?"

Or words to that effect. At any rate, he used the words "honest people" in a manner offensively

excluding the disciples from the class embraced by that appellation. Which was unjust, for this religious gathering were honest people and were spending their lives, and indeed, holding this identical service of song and prayer in the interests of making the world more honest. The admonition, therefore, by its lack of truth, lost much of its force. So, while the ladies modestly averted their faces from the human gold-fish at the door, the leading disciple rose with dignity and, without replying to the objection of the intruder, said that as they appeared to be disturbing others, the meeting would come to a close. The objector, thus ignored, retired to his couch. And presently quiet reigned.

William did not sleep soundly. The deep bay of the steamer's whistle continued at regular intervals. When he was awake he was waiting for its roar. When he was asleep it wove itself into his dreams. At length when dawn came and the bars of light that entered through the slatted door burned themselves on his vision so that he saw them even after he closed his eyes, he rose, dressed and went out upon the deck.

The prospect was exactly the same as it had been the night before. They were enclosed still by the bell-jar of fog which seemed to resolve it-

self into solid structure. As he passed under the windows of the wheel house, he gleaned the information from a snatch of conversation between the man at the wheel and the first officer that there had been an unusual electrical disturbance which had affected the compass and made their reckoning uncertain. They had, of course, been unable to pick up any of the usual lights in the fog to check up their position.

William leaned against the damp rail and watched the men taking the sounding. The ship rolled with a sickening motion as it crawled through the fog. He made a mental prophecy that there would be only a small proportion of the passengers to report for breakfast.

The heaving of the lead proceeded under adverse conditions. The fog was so thick that it was impossible for the man at the waist to see the bow of the vessel. He could not see when the man forward cast the lead, and on that account could not time his reading of the line with the precision that was necessary for a correct sounding. If he failed to catch the depth just as the line was exactly perpendicular, the sounding was useless—or rather, it was dangerous, for it gave a greater depth than actually existed.

As there was nothing else to divert him, Wil-

liam amused himself at each cast of the lead, by trying to decide when he would have called the line perpendicular, had he been taking the reading. He was noted, in all athletics, for his quickness of eye, and he was certain that the man was taking all his readings too late. He glanced at the young officer who had charge of the operation, to see if he was observing closely, but the officer was engrossed in his note-book, where he entered the depths as the sailor called them out.

"How close an idea do these soundings give you of your position off-shore?" William asked him, at a convenient moment.

"Very close indeed, sir," responded the officer, crisply. "The whole of the Atlantic coast slopes off at the rate of a fathom per mile. Thirty fathoms of water means thirty miles from shore."

As the dull, gloomy day dragged on, William found his spirits sinking lower and lower. The thick, sticky fog, which did not even permit him to see the top of the ship's funnels, the regular baying of the whistle and the snail's pace of the boat through the water bred in him an unaccustomed feeling of foreboding. He was not used to premonitions of danger, but one was growing upon him. It was doubtless due to his recently overwrought condition of mind that this premonition

had come. However, he could not release himself from a feeling of annoying disquiet. Some atmospheric irregularity had interfered with the accuracy of their compass and the fog had interfered with the accuracy of their soundings. In his usual calm and tranquil frame of mind, he would not have considered these things, being perfectly willing to leave the navigating of the ship to the persons who understood such things. But just now he was in a despondent mood.

A breeze began to blow about noon, but the fog did not lift. William's feeling of uneasiness increased. He did not understand it and when he spoke of it, rather deprecatingly, to Mrs. Carver, she laughed good-humoredly.

"A little thick weather does not worry these big steel boats, does it?" she asked.

Not ten minutes later the lie was given to those words. He was drinking a glass of water in the smoking room, when suddenly the glass was dashed out of his hand by some unseen power and fell with a crash against the wooden wall. He himself was projected headlong into a great leather chair.

Each man looked, astonished, at his neighbor. There was a moment of stunned quiet all over the ship, broken only by the violent ringing of the

engine bell. As if in response to its clang a chorus of screams rose from the staterooms. From every door, human beings, clad in various unsuitable garments, peeped or rushed out, whiter and more frightened than the nausea of the morning could have made them. The swelling murmur of voices was partially drowned out by the throbbing again of the engines. The churning from astern denoted that the propellors were now reversed. The cause of the seismic disturbance therefore was that the vessel was aground.

The third officer and the purser made their way diplomatically among the passengers, assuring them that there was no danger. The vessel was apparently aground, but with a little maneuvering, they would be able to float her off in a short time. At any rate the sea was comparatively quiet, and the fog already was showing signs of lifting.

It has since been held that the *Brocadillo* went aground simply on account of the sheer perversity of the elements. There was no accounting for the electrical disturbance, which was greater upon that day and caused more variation in the compass needle than at any time during the previous twenty years. There was no accounting, except perhaps by the fact that it was the ebb tide of the

full moon, for the strong current that set inshore. No one was able to explain even why the soundings had not revealed her position. To this day it is discussed along the coast without solution—except to conclude that luck was against her. This theory is held most strongly because thirty minutes after she grounded the fog lifted, and at five-thirty o'clock all on board had a fine clear view of the distant shore.

Passengers began to come out upon deck, a little more securely clad, a little better physically from the fact that the steamer, now resting on firm ground, no longer rose and fell with that sickening rhythm, and a little happier mentally because the fog had lifted. It was not much more than two or three miles to shore, and they laughed, albeit still somewhat nervously, at their first fright and confusion.

At six-thirty, a crew from the coast guard station, who had put out immediately, came alongside in their self-bailing surf-boat. The fog had then blown away entirely, the sea was calm, and there was every indication of fair weather. The captain held a conference with the surfmen, and it was soon announced that he had refused to send the passengers ashore, as he believed there was no danger and he was therefore not empowered to

land them without instructions from the company. Some second-class mail, however, that the vessel was carrying, it was deemed advisable to send ashore. The boat pulled away, having promised to return again before dark. They watched it grow smaller in the distance with no feeling of regret.

When it returned again at eight o'clock the full moon was shining. The captain as a precaution, however, asked the surfmen to hoist their boat aboard and stay through the night. This made timid minds easier. At nine o'clock the wrecking steamer *Iroquois* hove in sight and after some delay made fast to the *Brocadillo* and began pulling on her. Everything appeared to be calm and satisfactory. The passengers, worn out with loss of sleep and seasickness, went to their staterooms and were soon asleep. All was quiet and peaceful on the moonlit sea.

But about twelve o'clock a sudden change came over the night. The wind veered around to the north-east. It brought with it presently a taste of rain. Over the horizon across the stretch of moonlit water rose a thin black wall like a curtain of smoke. It lay—a huge cigar—dividing the water from the starlit sky. Then it began to rise, blotting out the stars, a dozen at a time. The

wind freshened. A roller of water, visible for half a mile over the bright sea, came on toward them and struck the ship broadside with a blow like an underground explosion, and the spray flew high over the wheelhouse.

The black curtain blotted out a third of the eastern sky. It was like an eclipse of the heavens. It advanced with great speed, devouring constellations as it moved and leaving blank desolation behind it. A moment and the moon shone. A moment and the black mantle had passed before it, leaving the sea in deep darkness.

The wind roared across the decks. More rollers, invisible now in the night, bombarded the iron hull. The main deck seethed with the wash of them and sometimes, as the crest passed by, the whole vessel except the cabins, was under water. The men in the wheel-house could hear the splash of the steel towing hawser as it dug in and out of the wave.

Sometimes the lights of the wrecking steamer were lost altogether. When she could be made out it could be seen that she was struggling against the waves that struck her broadside and forced her inshore. The screws of the *Brocadillo* continued to revolve, churning the water astern.

About three o'clock William was awakened by

the banging of his stateroom door. Seeing that the storm had risen, he dressed hastily. As he stepped from his room, he met a ship's officer on his rounds to wake the passengers and get them together in the main saloon. He took the life preserver that lay in the rack over his head.

He saw dimly the lights of the wrecking steamer astern. He could feel the *Brocadillo* jar under the impact of each wave, and it seemed as if she must be being driven further aground every instant. The ship's officer, returning, touched him on the arm and said it would be better to go inside. Drenched with spray, he entered, and found the cabin full of dressed and half-dressed passengers.

The roar of the storm without was incessant. The ship trembled at the force of the waves. Women cried, and a man kneeling down on the top step of the stairway to the dining saloon began to pray.

This seemed fruitless and, slipping unnoticed out again upon the promenade deck, William wrapped his arms around an iron stanchion and watched the storm. It seemed from the relative position of the steamer and of the wrecking craft, that the *Brocadillo's* stern had been swinging around. Out of the night he saw the inclined side of a mountain of water coming toward them.

The lights of the saloon windows shone in squares for a moment on its smooth surface, before it burst upon them. It was as if he were in the midst of the sea. Spouting water enveloped him. A great hand grasped the keel of the vessel and, lifting it bodily, set it down again with a jar that broke his hold and threw him prone upon the deck.

When he rose the ship was full of escaping steam. He groped about for the rail and walked toward the wheel-house. As he came abreast of the stairs to the house, a man passed him, running, and, bursting into the wheel-house, shouted that the stern had gone aground and one propeller was disabled. The jar had disjointed the steam-pipes, and the engine room was full of steam.

"Then call the *Iroquois* on the wireless and tell him to go—while the going is good," said the captain, by way of reply.

The wireless cracked overhead. After a time it could be seen that the wrecking steamer had cast off the line and was steaming out to sea. When her lights, growing dimmer and dimmer in the distance, disappeared at length behind the storm, they were left alone at the mercy of the hurricane. It seemed inhuman of the other vessel to make off to safety, but it was apparent that she could have lent no assistance. No small boat could have

remained afloat in such a sea. While William stood clinging to the iron supports, the coast guard surf boat was crushed by the blow of a wave and torn from the davits.

The waves increased in violence, and soon the upper deck became untenable. He entered the cabin, humid and sweltering with escaped steam. The boat had listed to starboard and, as each wave passed, a rivulet of water poured under the doors on the port side and washed across the carpeted floor. It was ridiculous that the ashen-faced women, believing themselves in the presence of death, should yet sit with their feet propped up out of the wet. And when they prayed they made islands on the wet carpet with their life-preservers, on which to kneel. Thus are the habits of a lifetime not easily broken.

William did not pray. It seemed to him a time for action rather than supplication. When the captain sent the steward below to secure provisions from the galley, he asked permission to go also. The galley was knee deep in water, which for some unknown cause seemed to be rising steadily. He called to a young man, who was standing at the head of the stair, smoking one cigarette after another, and got him to form a line for the purpose of passing food to the upper saloon.

This had been going on for about ten minutes when a larger and stronger wave than usual fell upon the skylight over the stair and made a clean breach big enough to drop a barrel through. A column of green sea dropped through the hole, as if some Brobdingnagian faucet had been turned upon them. Water shot in all directions. The lower saloon and dining room became a lake, in which the tables, still set with their white clothes, stood like lily-pads, or were submerged altogether.

The line became impractical, for the food arriving at its destination was drenched and unfit for use. In addition to this the lights were beginning to burn low. The line was broken up and the men returned to the upper saloon.

There was nothing then to do. They sat, or simply stood, in the stolid and tired silence of people waiting at a station for a train long overdue. When one of them spoke the others turned to listen—as if thinking the speaker might have noted some favorable sign. The lights burned dimmer until the filaments of each ceased to throw out an incandescent glow and were mere red twisted worms within the glass. At almost regular intervals a shock and a roar like the passing of a train, followed by the turning on of the giant

faucet overhead announced the coming and going of another wave.

Spade, who but a few hours before had affirmed his belief that his powers were all-sufficient to combat every earthly contingency, found himself in a few hours helpless and less powerful than one of the drops of salt spray that sprang from the breached skylight. Yesterday he trod the ground secure in his youth and strength. Today he saw the boundary-line of eternity. Humility was not in his nature—but surprise at the futility of his presence and prowess stupefied his brain.

At length the red twisted worms in their glass cocoons disappeared simultaneously, leaving the boat in a darkness that was absolute. No ray of light split the night that closed about them all like a solid substance. Those who had matches found them soaked in brine. When a person moved, he stumbled over a neighbor. Therefore, they soon stopped moving. They were numbed—anæsthetized. The smell of the escaping steam woke no fear in them. The roar of the intermittent geyser from the skylight above stirred no emotion. They waited—dully and with unaccustomed patience.

Somewhere in their midst but giving no sense of location in that opaque darkness, rose, above the

tearing of the wind and the drum-like roll of the water, the booming voice of the captain.

"This is a battle," he said, solemnly, "between a great storm and a strong vessel. It is a question of endurance. We must put our trust in the Lord God of Hosts."

"Which is not reassuring," muttered Mrs. Carver, with unconscious blasphemy.

CHAPTER XXIV

COPY-BOOK MORALITY

Through the window William watched the coming of the dawn. It was eagerly awaited by every soul in the cabin, though the dawn itself meant neither peace nor safety. But it would break through that stifling darkness that made them all so many blind people who had lost all sense of direction and distance in that unaccustomed space.

At length, without their being aware when the change occurred, they found themselves suddenly able each to distinguish the shadowy form of his neighbor. When he regained his bearings William made his way to the window and looked out. There was no rift in the sky. The blackness of night had simply turned to a sickly gray. From a forward window he was able, as the light grew stronger, to see long mountains of water charging in upon them. The crest of each wave he saw in the distance, separating itself from leaden drab of rain and sea. Majestically it moved with no ap-

pearance of haste—a regular and smoothly surfaced mound of water as high as the third story of a house. As peaceful and gentle in appearance as the grass grown slope of a meadow it was, until with a reverberating boom it broke its smooth surface against the bow, sending geysers spurting high above its crest and rushing headlong down the length of the steamer, obliterating all but the upper cabin in a sea of foam.

It was high tide again now and the stern of the vessel appeared to have floated off. Her nose still remained hard and fast aground, and William could feel the boat turning so that the waves began to strike her abeam. She rocked and shook under the bombardment. Even to his inexperienced mind it was plain that no ship could stand this sort of treatment for any great length of time.

He found the members of the crew putting on oilskins and sou'westers and rubber boots, indicating that something was afoot. He had noticed the night before in their reconnaissance on the lower deck that in one of the staterooms of the after saloon was just such an outfit. Slipping away unnoticed he waded through the dining hall and, after several wrong entries, found the room he wanted, with the coat, hat and boots stuffed

into a recess originally meant for life preservers.

When William returned to the upper saloon attired in this costume, he was soon lost among the members of the crew. And, when they leaped out one at a time through the quickly opened and shut door, he leaped out too in his turn.

It was no pleasant promenade on that deck. A man did not dare for one instant to loose his hold upon some firm object. The never-ceasing gale that struck him in the back like the body of a man thrown against him, the almost blinding rain and now and again the mountain of water that rolled by them and through them, made merely keeping one's footing a matter of great skill. He wondered how they would be able to accomplish anything.

But they did. In moments of necessity they trusted to luck for their footing and pulled on the rope in their hands to move the great anchor before the next wave should come. He found himself forgetting the oncoming wave in the excitement of giving one more heave. Each one of these anchors weighed three thousand pounds. But they got them into position and let them go into the sea, each with sixty fathoms of steel chain attached. One of these was let go first to port and, when the ship swung around, another was

let go to starboard. William, landsman that he was, did not at first see the strategy of these anchors. But by hauling in upon one or the other chain they were able to keep the ship's head to the wind and thus give her as much chance as possible against the sea.

However, she was already badly sprung and was leaking fast. The engine room, having taken water that came in through the open skylight as well as from the opened plates of the keel, was flooded. When they went into the wheel house after their efforts with the anchors, they could hear through the engine-room speaking tube the bell below ringing dismally with the roll of the ship.

They could make out with the glasses the coast guard station on the beach, and as there was now no power for the wireless, the captain got his signal flags out of the locker and ran up a message on the main truck. After some time an answering string of flags appeared ashore. Translated it read, "We cannot get to you. The country prays for you."

They realized then that millions ashore had read about them at their breakfast tables. "The country prays for you." A bitter phrase indeed. "God bless you" thrown at a starving beggar.

Spade had never before given Death serious thought. Life had been the problem that had confronted him. He had never been in a position where the termination of his existence seemed imminent. At first he had looked upon the shipwreck calmly. When the others had rushed about wringing their hands and praying, he remained cool, with the sporting air of a fatalist. If the ship must sink, it would sink, and it helped none to lament about it.

That was twelve hours ago. If it had sunk then he would have died with unruffled mind—with a physical courage that might have been called superb, but with no thought of his soul. But as the storm continued unabated and the end, while every moment becoming more and more certain, still did not come, he began to have a wild desire that it would come and not hold him in suspense.

Little by little, there being now nothing at all to do, his mind pushed every other matter from it. He could think of nothing but the breaking up of the ship and the swallowing of all those people in the sea. He looked out across the waves and wondered how long he could stay afloat in that turmoil of water.

He was overwhelmed, stunned, stupefied by the

gigantic power against which he was struggling. He had always admitted the force of the elements as a thing to be expected—as part of the structure of the world. Expanse of water, which he sailed upon in a steel boat, violence of storm, from which he had been protected by masonry walls, cold, heat, lightning, from which he had also been protected by human ingenuity, were not things that in the past had proved to him the existence of a Divine Power. But now, at a point where the power of man had so evidently broken down, realizing that his strength of body or mind was quite too small to be considered in the presence of the gigantic forces against him, he would have been lacking in mentality indeed had he not seen in it and admitted the hand of a God who controlled his puny life and to whom, therefore, he must be accountable.

He reentered the cabin and saw the people again kneeling in prayer, led by the disciple who had the day before talked to him. He felt no contempt for the old man. Instead he found himself sympathizing with the idea of prayer. It was the process of admitting human inability to cope with the situation at hand. He admitted that inability in him. But he did not pray. He felt that he had no right to pray—he who had

not believed in it, who had at all previous times, when prayer had not been necessary for his safety and welfare, ignored it; what right had he to seize it now? It was taking something that did not belong to him.

His instinct was to follow a sort of inverted golden rule—to do unto himself as he had done to others. Since he himself had not accorded lenient treatment to others (and had, not long since, defended such a course strongly) he would not now ask for lenient treatment for himself. In his warped yet altogether earnest view of the situation, his worst fear was lest he should be a hypocrite. He felt that he had erected a barrier between himself and God which he was not entitled to attempt to remove.

There was a touch of self-castigation in this that was Puritanical. It was plain that the elements were slowly but surely battering the iron shell in which they huddled out of its shape, until presently it would not be a boat at all but a hopeless wreckage over which the waves would wash clean and between whose decks no humans could be alive. Death itself faced them and he punished his immortal soul by not permitting it to ask for succor or to commend itself to Heaven.

All the day they sat cooped up in the vessel like

rabbits in a warren. The dull dark day, the hot stifling cabin, seemed to take from them the power to think and to be rational beings. The wringing of hands and weeping that had gone on at first, would, under these conditions, soon have driven every sane thought from the minds of them all, had it not been that Mrs. Carver got them interested in the preparation and serving of the scanty meals which they were able to cook on an oil stove that had been rescued from the salt water. This kept them occupied, and, to a certain extent, diverted.

Their greatest enemy was thirst. The warping of the ship's hull had broken her water pipes and filled the whole system with brine. A little bit of spring water—a carboy half full—had been rescued from the galley together with the food. The steward had vouchsafed the most helpful information that there was more of it in the forward hold, now completely submerged. A few adventurous spirits had earlier in the day made a trip, which was in the nature of deep-sea diving, to the ship's bar and brought back several dozen bottles. Of these the captain promptly confiscated the intoxicants and left for distribution a number of bottles of mineral water and ginger ale. These in turn were confiscated by the steward, together

with the bottle of spring water, and their contents dealt out with mathematical exactness—first in the morning, again at noon, and later at six o'clock in the evening—a tablespoonful to each person each time.

The torrid, breathless atmosphere of the cabin induced unusual thirst and made this allowance painfully inadequate. Men and women went about with the perspiration streaming down their faces as if they had been engaged in hard labor. They tried to alleviate the situation by opening a window, but this resulted in the entrance of not very much air and quite too much water—water of which they could not taste a drop. Thirst increased as the day wore on, and by nightfall they spoke to each other in husky voices that resulted from parched throats and dry lips.

They were a silent band—patient with the awed, powerless patience of a drove of sheep immured in a slatted car and doomed by the red stripe on their backs. In the corner of the cabin sat motionless, hour after hour, a swarthy, black-haired Greek, a heavily reinforced bag such as bank-runners use clasped between his feet as in a vise, his body performing the human functions of breathing and of eating and drinking, when food and drink were brought to him, but being other-

wise as inanimate and almost as immovable as the wooden pillar beside his chair. The bag was full of coins, actual gold and silver coins, which made a rich sound when the bag was moved—the proceeds from the sale of his business. They represented the accumulation of a lifetime, and one could see in his dull, stupid eyes that he felt that his life and the money went together—whether to safety or into the sea.

A few feet from him, neither weeping when the others wept, nor screaming when they screamed, nor talking when they talked, sat the placid-faced old lady he had spoken of the first night on the boat, as being good because her sheltered life had shown her no evil. But it was now proved that the sheltered life had taught her a trusting courage that was miraculous. It was childlike and unthinking, but it was inspiring in that it was evident that she had said, "I am in the hands of the Lord"—and believed it! William learned more of the subtle nature of his relation to his Maker from this unthinking yet certain old soul than it had ever been given him before to know.

"That," he said, hoarsely, to Mrs. Carver, the vibration of his voice rasping his parched throat, "is the quality I have not yet understood. It seems to be a realization of reciprocity with God."

She nodded, but did not reply.

"She seems to feel that if she has been considerate and kind to the people about her—and heaven knows she could not have been otherwise, possessing that face—God will be considerate and kind to her."

"That is copy-book morality," she said, smiling.

"That may be what I need," he replied.

About six o'clock, after the tablespoonful of water had driven him to a fury of thirst, William, seized with a certain idea, took with him a coast guard man and plunged out into the storm. The other had only a vague notion of what was to happen, but followed anyway. The hills of lead-gray water, from some inexhaustible source, still rolled in upon them with unceasing regularity. The wind drove welcome cold rain into their faces. They grasped nearby stanchions to let the first huge wave go by. As the crest passed they stood to their knees in the broad Atlantic with nothing but sea before and to each side of them for miles and a few yards high of deckhouse behind them. Part of the wave broke high over the cabins, wetting the red top of the ship's funnel, coming awash like a river down the length of the cabin roof and then pouring in smooth sheets over its edge.

As soon as all these manifestations were over

and before the next oncoming bank of water struck, they sprang to the warped and twisted iron ladder and clambered to the hurricane deck above. And there upon a vertical iron surface, sheltered from the salt waves, upon which the driving rain beat and ran down, they drank their fill of fresh water, licking it like kittens from the surface. And never had a drink been so grateful.

Thus refreshed, they stood in the rain and the flying spray, bracing themselves against the solid onslaught of the wind—contented. As they looked at the dim, low-lying shore, with a suggestion of a wide inlet to southward beyond a needle of land, something strangely familiar about the place impressed itself upon him. For the first time, amid the confusion of their condition, he asked the name of the shore.

"Bound Beach," replied the surfman, unexpectedly.

Bound Beach! What curious trick of Providence it was to place him here near that shore—where he had first seen the woman he loved—where his life seemed to have begun, and in sight of which it might now end.

CHAPTER XXV

DECISION

Ashore the newspapers were black with headlines announcing the plight of the *Brocadillo*. It was seized upon as a topic of nation-wide importance—not that it concerned the wide nation; but that the nation insisted upon all cases of murder and sudden death being brought to its attention, with all the minor details. The populace at large is shocked and grieved at the news of disaster and their hearts are filled with grief and sympathy; but the harboring of these large and higher emotions gives a feeling of uplift and satisfaction. They sit aghast at the mention of horrors, but the horrors have a fascination for them that makes them eager for more news of them.

The newspapers, therefore, saw to it that the public was supplied with the necessary facts and the usual word-painting to enable them to visualize the scene. The morning papers on the day after the running aground were the first to make mention of the event. A boy left one of these at

the office of William Spade, not suspecting that the important announcement therein contained had no power to surprise him even if it could have been put in his hands.

But it had power to surprise the girl who sat at the desk in William Spade's office. She glanced at it indifferently from a distance as it lay upon the table, and forgot about it. Her mind was untranquil and disturbed and her interest in the usual routine of life was dulled. For the past few days she had merely been going through the motions of living, without taking an interest in the process. One newspaper more or less meant no more than one breath more or less.

But the newspaper lay there. And as it lay it seemed to take on an air of quiet persistence, as though it would have said, "I have the message. I propose to wait until I have an opportunity to deliver it."

Such determination could not but be successful. The girl rose presently, as if under the hypnotic influence of the inanimate sheet, and, going to the table, spread the paper out flat upon it. She read several things before she saw the account of the shipwreck, and she read several paragraphs of that before she realized that it contained anything of importance for her.

In the middle of a sentence she became aware suddenly that she was reading her own history. Or, at least, when she felt that first tight clutch at her heart, it seemed as though it concerned her more than it concerned anyone else—even those aboard the foundering ship.

That was her first thought. Her second was that it was of no importance to her. This was not really a thought—it was a speech. She said it several times to herself, and it was altogether logical and reasonable. She seemed to feel that it was reason enough for her to go on and, dispassionately, read the rest of the column of type before her. And yet she did not read it dispassionately. She read it in blocks, a paragraph at a time, as if attempting to get all the facts there expressed with one sweep of her eye down the page.

At the end of the column in the list of passengers, she read "William Spade, Washington, D. C." Her eye remained fixed upon the line until the name became not a name at all, but a mere curious arrangement of letters, and her mind had wandered afar off from the printed page.

It seemed after long consideration that that name was the symbol to her for happiness. She rebelled—and had been rebelling now for many a

long hour—against admitting that her life had entwined itself around his, like the tendrils of a rose about a sturdy trellis, and, having been entwined, could never, except by tearing the vine, be disengaged. But to rebel was merely futile, and the proof of the fact was the physical pain she suffered—as she attempted to disengage and forever separate the life of Ruth Dunbar from the life of William Spade.

Sometimes she encouraged herself to think that this joining together of their souls, being wholly involuntary as far as she was concerned, must have been arranged and provided for by Providence. Eagerly she strove to believe that loving the man must have been the result of an act of God; only to have her conscience drive the comforting thought from her and convince her that loving him was merely a temptation to try her soul. And she strove to prove that her soul was strong.

Bravely, therefore, she urged herself to the inhuman and preposterous attitude of indifference to the danger of the man who was the whole world to her. Indifference was the most unthinkable thing to her fevered mind and the simulating of it exquisite cruelty. It was therefore a pathetically humorous comedy that she enacted for

her own benefit. With a studied and unnatural air of calm, she went about her routine business, laboriously and painstakingly endeavoring to deceive—herself only. Her wrought-up mind did not see the drollery of this performance of legerdemain in which the audience was fully cognizant of all the subterfuges employed, and yet the prestidigitator, unsuccessful, still continued to perform. Until at length, she hurried home, hoping that the companionship of her family would make her attempt at calmness of mind more successful and convincing to herself.

She thought at first that in the cool quiet of the partly darkened house she would find the calm she wanted. But not for long. The world seemed to be vibrating with the news of the occurrence that was troubling her spirit. Her young brother returned home from the bank where he was employed, bubbling over with conversation concerning it. He dropped a kiss upon his mother's brow and an extra edition of the evening paper into her lap with one motion.

"Big wreck up on the Jersey coast," he said, as one whose breadth of mind calls upon him to take an interest in all current events. "Bottom flew up and hit a coastwise steamer. Been there

twenty-four hours already and storm is increasing. On account of the high sea, the coast guard have forbidden anyone to put out to the rescue. Fine way to treat fellow human beings, what?"

He disappeared into his room for a moment to drape his uncreased coat upon its appointed hanger, and, returning, exuded, with a certain youthful nonchalance, righteous indignation.

"If I were down there in sight of the ship, do you suppose any coast guard could prevent me from at least attempting to go out to her? Do you suppose I could stand by and see fellow human beings"—the phrase pleased him—"go down to death before my very eyes?"

Ruth's breath came and went rapidly as this discussion proceeded. She bowed her head so that they might not know how eagerly she was following it.

"Foolhardiness is not bravery," Mrs. Dunbar asserted mildly, picking the flaw in her son's excited reasoning.

"Neither is smug cautiousness. Read the message they sent the ship. 'The country prays for you.' In case of emergency people nowadays," with the air of a man who had lived down through the ages, "offer a prayer or contribute fifty cents

and feel their responsibility ends. I'll bet old man Starkwether will go out to them if he can get anyone to go with him."

Ruth's hands gripped the arms of her chair and she looked up at her brother with a strange light in her eyes—almost of one who has seen a vision.

"Oh," exclaimed the boy, suddenly, wholly as an afterthought, "there is a William Spade, of Washington, among the passengers. That couldn't be your William Spade, could it?"

She did not move her eyes from his. "Yes," she replied, steadily. "That is—my William Spade."

Her mother was looking at her strangely. The labored steadiness did not deceive her. Pity and concern and a new understanding came to her mind. But if tears were in her mother's heart, she kept them from her eyes, and if words hurried to her tongue she did not speak them.

Long hours that night she lay awake listening to the signs that spoke of wakefulness in her daughter's adjacent room. She wished to go to her and comfort her, as was her right, but the sanctity of the secret she had discovered loomed higher than even the ever-present instinct of motherly protection. At midnight, as the cacophonous voices of the newsboys calling extra papers dis-

turbed the quiet of the street, she heard Ruth rise hastily from her bed.

But even she could not picture fully the chill of fear that seized the girl, as drawing on her kimono, she stole barefooted and silent to the front door of the house, eager yet overwhelmingly afraid, to hear the news that might be there for sale. But it was relief that shone in her eyes as she saw at once by the heavy type that it was not of the end of the ship that the paper had to tell. She stood anxiously upon the steps, reading by the light from the street lamp.

The purpose of the paper was to announce that the wrecking craft which had been trying to pull the *Brocadillo* off the bar had returned to port with the information that the steamer was in a critical position. It was rather a footless and inconsequential announcement, disseminating information in another form that was already known. But the report, discouraging as it was upon the face of it, was almost good news—for the fact that it had not been the announcement of disaster was a reprieve—a stimulus for hope.

More hours she lay sleepless upon her bed. This enforced communion with herself shattered beyond repair the carefully builded fiction that she was no longer held to him by any bond. On the

contrary she was eager now, when it appeared inevitable that she would not see him again, to believe that a bond did hold her to him. If he should go down into the sea and be forever lost to her, she would want to believe that she had belonged to him.

She was sorry that she had not allowed him to hold her in his arms, to say and know that she was his. She had a feeling that if they could have both believed that she loved him it would have made the bond between them that did not now exist. And, morbid and tiny satisfaction that this would have been, it was a source of bitterness to know that it was denied her.

In the morning she went to her office as usual—a little worn and tired from the night of disputation with her soul, but more disturbed by fears of the future than by present weariness. The impersonal jealousy she stirred up in her breast by the thought that he had no claim upon her and that she was no more his than any one of all the other women in the world was punishment to her.

She made a pretense of working—but she was restless. It was impossible for her to sit still long in her chair, or to concentrate her mind. She found herself reading a whole letter through without knowing at all what it was about. At last she

gathered her work into a thick sheaf and, putting it all in a basket ironically marked "Immediate attention," rose and walked irresolutely across the room. On a small table in the corner of the room lay the office atlas. Moved by a sudden impulse, she bent over the volume and looked up, among its intricate maze of names and symbols, the location of Bound Beach. In tiny type, there it was, its position represented by a dot so small that the delineator in making it could scarcely have allowed his pen to more than touch the paper. She scaled the distance to the place by laying her pencil on the map, marking the distance on it with her finger and comparing it with the scale of miles. Two hundred miles it was.

Two hundred miles! Aside from all the other things that separated her from him, headed by the formidable fact that she could not lay claim to have been affianced to him, was added now two hundred miles. Although he was surrounded by the storming sea, whose great forces were striving to separate him from her by eternity itself, she was making no use of the opportunity to come nearer to him, while there was yet time, than two hundred miles.

The words rang in her ears. The clock on the wall ticked them off until, listening to it, she was

like one in a delirium. The words were a reproach to her and the clock—his clock—seemed forever reiterating them to her with that intent. It seemed to accuse her of disloyalty in remaining far away from him while it ticked away the precious remaining minutes of his life.

With no definite plan she put on her hat and took her bag from the table. Incredulous of her own half-formed intention, she counted the money in the pocket-book and, sitting down at the desk, hastily wrote a check for considerably more. She picked up the telephone and held it in her hand for a thoughtful moment. Then, calling her mother, she explained that she might be compelled to leave the city that afternoon and might not return until the next day. As she had been forced to do this several times before, it was a satisfactory explanation to offer.

Upon the street a strong wind was blowing and it was beginning to rain. She hurried to her bank and then, with no hesitation but with a curious interest as to how far the impetus of her idea would carry her, she boarded a car for the railroad station. Nearing the station the impetus of the idea seemed to grow stronger rather than weaker. In fact, she had come to the very firm conclusion that if she showed even a fruitless loy-

alty by going to him in the crisis it would be a comforting thing to think of afterwards. And if he were saved—she could escape without his knowing what she had done.

There was a train at half-past twelve that she must take. And when it pulled out of the station she was upon it.

At half-past nine that night Ezra Starkwether opened his door to the storm. He had seen the wavering lantern held by someone slowly approaching who breasted the gale with difficulty. When he saw by its uncertain light that beside the man who carried it walked a woman, he took his gray head, uncovered, out into the night to meet them.

Unperturbed, unsurprised, unquestioning, he greeted the storm-chilled girl and led her in to the homely comfort of the kitchen stove, where he forced her to kick off her soaked shoes, which gurgled when she walked, and thrust her feet into the oven. Her other clothes had been more or less protected by a yellow sou'-wester provided by the man Peter who had escorted her the last part of the journey. Peter, curious yet anxious to be of assistance, sat in a tilted-back chair, which he brought down upon all fours with alacrity when there was any mention of anything to be fetched

or carried. Otherwise he sat quietly and stared ahead with unspeculative eyes. Old man Starkwether stood by the stove thoughtfully opening and shutting the blade of his clasp-knife.

"Well," he said, at length, casually, "what brings you down here in this driving storm?"

"The steamer out here," she replied.

He knitted his bushy brows. "Someone aboard you know?"

"Yes."

"Relatives?"

"No." She swallowed something that rose in her throat. "A friend."

He nodded his head several times understandingly. "One of the young men that was here with you this summer?" he asked, going to the heart of the matter.

"The first one," she answered, faintly.

There was a silence in the room save for the simmering of the kettle on the stove.

"The steamer's in a bad way," said Peter, in a deep, toneless voice, like someone reciting a piece.

Neither one answered him nor commented upon his statement. Starkwether closed his knife and thrust it into his pocket.

"Peter and I were thinking," he said, "of going out there in the yawl after them. I cal'late we

understand the humors of the seas hereabouts better than most."

He gazed meditatively at the stove. The girl said nothing, but hot excitement gripped at her heart. She waited, wondering if there was more to be said.

"However," the old man continued, "it would take three to man the boat in this weather, and no one else seems inclined to go."

She drew her feet from the oven and stood up excitedly, overturning the chair behind her.

"Why," she exclaimed, trying to be calm, but her eyes flashing fire, "I can go."

The old man eyed her wonderingly. "You?"

"Why not?"

"You're sailor enough." He hesitated. "But there is danger."

"That wouldn't prevent you from going, would it?"

"Yes, but we are old and useless. You are young, with all your life before you."

She put both her hands upon his rough cloth shoulders. "All my life," she cried, unsteadily, "is behind me if the boat out there—goes down."

He touched her upon the arm in a rough embarrassed way, and, as she turned away from them to hide her eyes that were wet now with a storm

that was not rain, he moved over to the stove to set back the boiling coffee pot.

"Well," he said, at length, looking at no one, "we can't go out now before dawn."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE YAWL

As the first gray of dawn brought life to the dead hulk of the night and the world arranged itself faintly into land and sky and sea, a phantom yawl—a mere smudge upon the blurred morn, ran up silent sails, muffled by the whistling gale, and worked its way, invisible from the shore, out from the heaving inlet to the tumult of the tossing sea beyond.

Behind the steersman of this phantom craft, a tiny sail, double-reefed, struggled against the gale, and forward another held it on its course. Mere postage stamps of sail they were, but they heeled over the snub-nosed, broad-beamed boat until she dug her scuppers into the waves and, with her blunt bow, shovelled up bulks of solid sea that broke and ran awash over her deck.

The gray-bearded steersman felt, rather than saw, his course across the dusky water. He could scarcely see the spray that leaped up at the bow, and in the tumult of the storm he was almost as a

deaf man. He could not hear the rattle of the stay-sail when he held his craft too close into the wind, and the resulting stentorian "Shakin' forrad" of the man in the bow came back to him as a whisper.

After each long struggling tack against the gale his bellowing voice would roar against the storm. A tiny echo, it reached the ears of the tall man and his slender companion forward. As the bow came up into the wind they would let go the sheet of the stay-sail and, grappling with the furious thing, which writhed and struggled like a wild animal, make it fast upon the other side—just before the gale, filling it out, drew it taut with a fury that strove to pull the cleat from the deck.

It was an hour before the light was strong enough to make visible from the shore the little craft rising upon the breast of each moving wall of water and disappearing from sight in the depths beyond. When eager marine glasses striving to pick the stranded steamer out of the distant gray, saw before them this determined creature struggling manfully against the sea, the first feeling of the onlookers was of amazement and wonder—and then of pity. To them it seemed only to mean that here were a few more lives sacrificed to the greed of the storm.

The news spread. For two hours the gathering crowd watched the contest between the sea and the small thing that looked like a child's toy boat. People gathered from the beaches to north and south and stood in patient, excited groups on the shore. It had been many a day since Bound Beach had harbored such a throng. The yawl tacked and came about and tacked and came about with monotonous regularity, seeming merely to be sliding from right to left and from left to right on a line parallel with the shore, without apparently gaining an inch to seaward.

Yet actually it did gain, creeping steadily toward the black hull—which, lying far down by the stern and keeled over, was a mere shapeless mass, not like a ship at all, from which a mast and a red-banded stack pointed dizzily shorewards.

To the crew upon the yawl, it was immeasurably far away. They caught glimpses of it periodically beyond the unending ranks of waves, each of which as it came they laboriously ascended and, coming down upon the other side, seemed never nearer than before. The goal was always the same distance from them, as though the storm were solid substance that formed a wall against them.

A skipper less seasoned to the humors and tac-

tics of the sea and the wind on that particular shore—against which he had battled for nearly half a century—would have stood no chance. Starkwether did not permit himself to be disturbed by the storm's blind strength, but feeling at length the wind upon his cheek almost imperceptibly slacken—if slacken could be used to describe the slight diminution in intensity of a gale that was still three-fourths hurricane—he seized the opportunity to meet disaster half way and take the offensive into his own hands. He called for the raising of the three-reefed mainsail.

He brought the third member of the crew, who, dripping with spray and encased in boots and yellow skins, gave no sign of her sex, to hold the writhing wheel, which, borrowing power from the sea, bucked and struggled like a live thing. The two men then fell to the halyards. Ashore it seemed like suicide when the dirty white canvas rose from the deck. Aboard the wrecked steamer it spelled hope. The yawl reeled under her increased sail, but resisted the wind sturdily; and from the spurting foam at her forefoot it could be seen that she was taking the upper hand. For the first time she seemed to be actually moving through the water.

Aboard the slowly settling steamer, hope rose

in the breasts of the imprisoned passengers. In the hours since daybreak they had watched the sailboat coming toward them—doubtfully, incredulously, not daring to believe that the tiny craft could reach them. But they were grasping at straws, and this rescuer was their only hope.

When at length it came so close that the members of the crew were clearly visible, the hope became a precious and sturdy bulwark to which they clung with raised spirits. They made their individual and characteristic preparations to leave. They put on the clothes they most wanted to save, for the word had been passed around that for obvious reasons it would be impossible for anyone to carry even the smallest parcel or piece of luggage. It was ludicrous to see men, having for many hours faced death, gravely putting on coats and trousers over those already in place, and sitting double-clad in the stifling heat, hoping, with their lives, to save also an extra suit of clothes.

Here stood a young girl stolidly waiting—a much-prized evening gown, low in the neck and short as to sleeves, drawn hastily on over her dark suit and buttoned incompletely arear. Rotund ladies glittered with rows of breast pins, covering available surface like distinguished orders, and were puffed out more rotund than ever with pre-

cious articles stowed beneath their outer clothes.

The purser and assistants went about among the passengers collecting baggage and things of value to be stored in the safest place upon the ship, so that in event of its weathering the storm, these could be salvaged and returned to their respective owners. Receipts were carefully given and the businesslike proceeding put heart into them all.

But one poor, pathetic little man took no heart at this proceeding. For forty-eight hours he had sat with his leather bag between his feet, scarcely even moving, and when he did move, he took it jealously with him. The black-haired Greek watched the purser sullenly, fearfully, as he came on his round, gathering precious luggage and sending it away. Like an animal at bay, his eyes blazed in desperation. His whole body grew tense as the enemy approached.

The enemy stood before him. In the little man seated shyly there, this enemy saw no signs of pent-up emotion—and reached forward casually for the precious burden. Quick fire shot from the black eyes, and, as one whose child is to be torn from him, the Greek rose to his feet and miraculously held glittering steel in his hand. It took several men to overpower him and wrest away his avenging knife. His treasure was taken

from him, and he, who had stood the terrors of the storm undisturbed, sank dejected into his chair, all hope gone.

William Spade stood upon the sloping deck looking shorewards. There were no horizontal nor vertical surfaces now upon the steamer. One had to invent his own method of passing from spot to spot upon the inclined surfaces and of maintaining his footing in the spot where he happened to be. The passengers were not allowed upon deck, but, since William had been rendering service with the crew upon every available occasion, it was impossible to bar him now from any place because of its danger.

It was an absorbing struggle that he watched. The members of the crew beside him pointed out the small bits of skillful and daring seamanship exhibited by the skipper of the yawl. Almost forgetting that he was a person interested in the success of the craft, he shouted enthusiasm with the approving air of a person who watched a contest merely as a spectator.

They saw the yawl, cuffed and buffetted by the waves and bent over by the wind, doggedly and with a vicious determination, splitting the water and moving almost counter to the gale. It moved with an appearance of swaggering contempt for

the storm that was heroic. For those on board the steamer it changed hope to enthusiasm and enthusiasm to frantic joy.

At eleven o'clock, triumphant in its breasting of the storm, it stood abreast of the steamer's bow, a quarter of a mile away. It soon became apparent that no small boat could make the journey to bring a line from it to the *Brocadillo*. The only hope was that the yawl would be able to cast a line to the steamer and then drop safely to leeward and anchor.

To do this, the sailboat would have to come dangerously close to the steamer. It would require a delicate piece of steering to bring the craft close enough to cast the line, yet far enough away not to be drawn down by the suction of the water rushing back to fill the void made shorewards of the steamer by the pull of the passing wave. But the skipper of the yawl evidently felt that he could do it, for after jockeying around out to seaward for some time, he at last got into position and ran down almost before the wind toward the *Brocadillo's* bow.

So close was his course laid that to those watching it seemed as if he would strike her head on. A tall man stood in the bow holding a line. Tense excitement gripped them all. The little

boat, missing the great one by many yards, seemed still to be desperately close. Gauging the distance, fifty minds tried to decide whether the throw could be made. But as the yawl came abreast of the steel bow, the hull blanketed her, and, cut off from the wind, she slipped swiftly away. The man threw, and the line fell into the sea.

A groan of angry disappointment rose from the ship deck. But the sailboat, which seemed to have taken on a human personality, came about briskly and, undismayed, prepared to repeat the operation. After perhaps half an hour, she came down again before the wind. This time the man threw before the boat lost its headway. But just at that point the sea, rushing by the *Brocadillo's* bow, developed a choppy roughness that was impossible to gauge. The man was unbalanced when he threw and the line sprawled, a long thin snake, upon the waves.

With a calm thoroughness they tried a third time and a fourth time, maneuvering for a better position, but not seeming to find it. A fifth time they bore down upon the steamer. The little boat did not come straight on before the wind, but, tacking up from shorewards, sought out a position just beyond the bow and carefully timing the

waves, cut in just behind the crest of one and rushed by the steamer's nose so close that it seemed a miracle that she did not strike. The helmsman shouted. The man at the bow drew back his arm to cast, but instead, measured his length upon the deck.

The sea, curving round the bows like a mill race, had swirled in to fill the void left by the on-rushing wave. The flood of water caught the stern of the yawl and whirled it round as if it had been upon a pivot. The boat lay there wallowing in the sea, its sails shaking helplessly, its helm powerless to guide it. For a full half minute she lay there. Two lines shot out from the steamer, but the sloping deck gave poor footing and strangely destroyed one's sense of the horizontal, so that neither line reached its goal.

Then a great wave rolled over the steamer and seemed literally to drop into the yawl. No one aboard the *Brocadillo* expected ever to see her mast-side-up again. But when the spray had cleared, there she lay some thirty or forty yards further distant, her mast still pointing skywards, riding the waves bow on, with a certain appearance of calm and unruffled confidence.

Her sails filled and, making steerageway, she put off again to windward. It could be seen that

she had shipped much water and could not make many more such trials. The passengers of the steamer, filled with apprehension lest the little boat should give up the contest, cheered lustily.

But, despite this gloom fell upon those that thronged the tilting deck. The little craft, after her dangerous experiment of running in close, would be forced to more cautious tactics. Chance alone had saved her from capsizing as she lay helpless under the steamer's lee, and such a risk could not be taken again.

William Spade gazed contemplatively at the men on the deck and at the anxious faces peering from the cabin windows. Fifty souls there were depending upon the throw of a line. His habit of almost subconsciously figuring out probabilities and chance at the crises of his life made him feel that the line would not be successfully thrown.

It was the time for a decisive action. Someone aboard the *Brocadillo* must help. What was risking one's life now when they were all risking their lives? If he could do something to help his fellow men, it might give him a claim upon God. He felt the urgent need of establishing now a reciprocal relation such as the placid-faced woman in the cabin seemed to enjoy, with his Maker.

His mind was made up. With a furious en-

thusiasm he cast off boots and slicker and sou'-wester. It would have dumbfounded his companions could they have seen him as, shielded behind the corner of the cabin, he stripped down to his underclothes and made fast a line about his waist. The other end of the line he fastened securely to a cleat on the deck. All this he did secretly, lest someone in authority should forbid him to carry out his plan.

His heart beat high with excitement and, strangely enough, the one thought that came into his mind, now that he was ready for action, was a feeling of embarrassment at having to step out on the deck presently where all the strange motley of women behind the cabin windows would see him undressed.

The yawl, now dead before the *Brocadillo's* bows, a quarter of a mile distant, came about, and presently ran before the wind toward them. If all other hearts upon the steamer now beat fast with a painful anxiety, William's stood still. He went to the rail, but no one saw him—for every eye was glued upon the oncoming boat. It seemed hours that it took to cover the short distance. He had never before known such burning excitement as gripped him as he waited. He was willing to act, but uncertain of his ability to succeed.

The little craft came by the *Brocadillo's* bow, as upon her first trip, giving it ample room, yet sailing as close as the skipper dared. The tall man, now lashed to the shrouds, stood with the coiled line in his hand. The smaller figure was in the very bow watching the water. All these details he saw. They remained pictured on his mind.

The man in the bow suddenly shouted something and the one with the line drew back his arm.

Spade leaped upon the taffrail. The rope rose in a fine parabola, shot toward the steamer, and losing its momentum, amid a groan of disappointment, fell into the sea.

A second later, William Spade was in the water beside it.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LIFE LINE

It is a strange thing that heroic acts are judged and rated, not so much by the bravery and daring required for their performance as by the surprise they cause in the minds of the onlookers. The long lines of soldiers who stand for hours as patient targets for the enemy's fire, are not heroes, except in a broad, general sense, for they are doing what is expected of them; but if one of their number rushes out into the open to perform some useful deed, exposing himself spectacularly to the fire he has been exposed to unnoticed all alone, the shock of it brings him to notice.

Had the psychology of this occurred to Spade before hand, he could not have set the stage better for his feat. When the line cast from the yawl fell short and, with it, dropped every shred of reasonable hope, his white body, leaping from no one knew where, almost as miraculously as an angel from Heaven, had electrified them all. And when they saw at length that it was not an appari-

tion but a flesh and blood man, grasping in his hand the rope from the yawl and bound around his waist by another from the steamer, they gave themselves up to a frenzy of enthusiasm.

Aboard the sailboat, the tired crew saw it with hardly less excitement. And to one member of it, it meant more than excitement. The girl who stood at the mast-foot, salt water dripping from every corner of her water-proof masculine armor, was lifted bodily out of her weariness as she saw the man shoot overside into the ocean. But still more excitation of feeling was due her. As, involuntarily, she rushed to the gunwale to see whether he had caught the rope, the swimmer, striking out with a strong stroke, raised his head for an instant from the sea—and gave her a full view of his face!

For a moment it seemed as though she did not breathe—as though all her physical functions paused—save the power to gaze fascinated at the man in the water: and know that it was William Spade. Then the blood, released, rushed hot through her chilled body. Her breath came quickly. Forgetful of everything about her she shouted aloud to him, but scarcely heard the whisper of her voice against the wind.

It was a moment of exaltation. Every nerve

in her body was galvanized into life, as if she would, by the force of her very will-power, lend assistance to him. It was as if a part of her were performing the feat she witnessed. But it was a hundred times more glorious and comforting to know that the heroism was his. It raised him up actually to the place where she had put him, so that now the image of him she had unwillingly, yet uncontrollably, looked up to was replaced and deposed by the actual and living man.

Then, as a wave passed on, churning man and ropes about on its chaotic breast, leaving for a moment quiet water beneath the lee of the steamer, two score of hands drew upon the rope about his waist; and, just before the next wave struck, she saw him clamber over the rail, the precious line to the yawl clasped tightly in his hand.

The next few hours were dim and indistinct—filled with the steady, unexciting clinching of the advantage they had gained—stirring hours, but to the tired girl who had touched the zenith of excitement, anticlimactic and powerless to thrill.

While they were still struggling to get the line aboard the *Brocadillo*, there had been coming steadily toward them in the now calmer sea, unnoticed, three surf-boats, slowly propelled by many

sturdy oars. These, presently arriving upon the scene, were of inestimable value. What the situation needed now was brawn, fresh energy and expertness. Here it was.

When, by means of the light line running to the steamer, a heavier one had been drawn aboard and made fast and had again been made fast to the sailboat now anchored, bow and stern, to leeward, they had a sturdy connection between the two. With the aid of the small dory the yawl carried, they endeavored to improvise a rope-ferry. The dory, however, was too small and it was not until one of the surfboats was substituted for it that the arrangement appeared safe.

A trip between the two boats was successfully made—and then eleven others. The surfmen held bags of oil upon the waves to calm them and, as the transfer of passengers at each end was made, poured bucketsful of oil upon the water, so that no mishap occurred.

It was not necessary for Ruth to engage in any part of this work. There was plenty of hardened muscle available now. She gave her time therefore to trying to make the rescued women comfortable in the crowded cabin of the yawl. She did not even see the work of rescue. When all the women were aboard, the cabin was full to suf-

focation; and the overflow lined the deck, tied like convicts to a rope running from mast to helm. It was decided, with reason, that the craft was full. The others, therefore, with the exception of the captain and the chief engineer, who elected to stay aboard the steamer, were accommodated in the surfboats.

It was a long, tedious journey shorewards. But, as they neared the mouth of the inlet, the sun burst through the clouds for a few moments and threw a rainbow over the sky before them. The thousand people gathered upon the shore burst into a cheer—real music to everyone aboard the incoming boats.

A great press of people, half hysterical with enthusiasm, gathered about them as they landed upon the shore. The news soon spread that one of the rescuers was a woman. To her horror, therefore, when Ruth came ashore she found herself surrounded by a wild, cheering crowd of maniacs, who, deprived temporarily of all their mental faculties, shook hands with her, embraced her (regardless of sex), cut souvenir pieces from her rubber coat and were only prevented from kissing her by the surging of the crowd, which destroyed their aim.

She was at length entirely surrounded by news-

paper men. These, regarding her as their own personal property, impatiently shouldered aside the ordinary public, who, to their minds, were not supposed to come in contact with real news except through the insulating medium of the press. This girl represented real news, heart throbs, human interest, and what they would have called "woman-stuff"—the almost ideal newspaper story. The girl eyed their eager faces apprehensively, with all the trepidation of a missionary about to be invited to a cannibal feast.

"My dear young lady," exclaimed one of the cannibals, "this is a big woman-story. We'll exploit you from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, and back again. You will awake tomorrow morning to find yourself famous."

She laughed nervously, as might the reverend spreader of the gospel at first sight of the boiling water in the cauldron. But she was reassured when she saw Starkwether coming toward her.

"Your name, please," said one of the hungry journalists.

Her eyes shone. "Mary Smith," she said, and grasping the old man's arm, followed his broad shoulders through the crowd.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

Evading the multitude (which was made less difficult by the fact that few recognized her in her street clothes), Ruth was taken by motor boat from a secluded point on the inlet across to the further shore, where she just succeeded in catching a train, which carried her away an hour or more in advance of everyone else.

The remaining participants in the battle with the sea were proffered food, lodging, automobiles, motor boats in profusion. Some, thoroughly exhausted, were only too glad to stay where a chance of sleep presented itself. Others, anxious to be away to join friends and families who waited for them, accepted the first means of transportation that was offered, and went as quickly as modern devices could take them.

Spade, in the heat of the closing day which, now released from the caress of the north-east wind, became a normal summer evening, boarded a Pullman car, attired in two full suits of clothes

and carrying a light overcoat. With feverish haste he rushed into the smoking compartment and, unabashed, began to disrobe before the cold gaze of the smokers. They doubtless supposed, from lack of data on the subject, that he was about to perform a classic dance representing Narcissus, or Paris upon the walls of Troy.

But when, beneath his outer garments of modesty, there were presently disclosed other garments similarly modest, and when taking off a second coat and vest, he divested himself of his shirt, they saw that he was merely mentally unbalanced—or else that he bore a charmed life, so that no matter how much he took off, he always had the happy faculty of remaining fully clothed.

"Yo' just la'ake an onion, sah," exclaimed the Pullman porter, "you keep on peeling right down to the bittah end."

Spade, to whom, after the wearying days that had preceded, everything was serious, and for whom the world had not yet settled again into its normal perspective, turned in a matter of fact way to the others in the room.

"It's awfully hot in those things," he said, with the air of explaining away, at one fell swoop, the mystery of his taking them off.

The self-evident fact, however, did not explain, and for the remainder of the journey he slept in his chair surrounded by his additional and unnecessary garments, an object of general suspicion and distrust among his fellow-passengers, who discussed excitedly the wreck of the steamer *Brocadillo*, a subject they knew his enfeebled mind would be unable to grasp.

When he awoke for a few moments as the train stopped at an intermediate station he heard them still discussing it—heard them sleepily and half comprehendingly. He realized dimly that they had bought here extra papers describing the rescue of the passengers. His own name arrested his imminent dropping again into the abyss of sleep.

"This fellow Spade," rumbled a voice from behind a newspaper, "pulled off that grandstand play. Trust an old football star for that. Waited until everything else failed and then took the whole works into his own hands. Ninety-nine percent grit, that's what he is. Jumped right into that ocean just as if it were the four-foot-six end of a swimming tank—and turned the trick, by Jove. That's the point. When a fellow like that goes in to win, he wins!"

William moved uneasily in his chair.

"Why, I remember when I saw him playing

football about five years back—" But the starting of the train and the accompanying noise blotted out the words, and William was soon in oblivion again.

His first thought had been of his father and mother. They would certainly be worried until they saw their son again face to face. The train upon which he rode, in the character of harmless imbecile, was the first he could catch to take him to his old home.

He was a strange sight as he walked through the station, his clothes hanging upon his arm. But the people about him made little difference to him. The only emotion he felt was that resulting from the fact that he was alive and treading upon firm ground. Self-consciousness, small pride, and the whole gamut of the secondary and tertiary emotions that are the daily goads to humans, found no place in his mind. His soul had been viewing big things, his mind was set at a wide angle, and nothing petty was registering upon his consciousness.

He found that his father had been seriously ill as a result of the shock occasioned by the news of the shipwreck. William saw when he greeted him the signals of the old man's capitulation to the years he carried upon his shoulders.

"The night before last," said the old gentleman, almost with unconcern, "I felt that it was not to be given me to live until morning."

"And," he continued, "I made the resolve then that if I recovered, I should lead a better life."

It was absurdly pathetic that this man, whose only fault was that he had allowed his ideas of right and duty to interfere with his own comfort and happiness, should speak of chastening his life!

"I am in thorough accord with your sentiment," William said. "However, I had a close call myself. While things hung in the balance I had plenty of time to think it over, and I have come to the conclusion I have hitched my wagon to the wrong star. I have not realized my responsibilities. I have allowed an advanced state of civilization and breeding to stand in the place of conscience and morality. And it has not worked."

"Conscience and morality," said the old man, "are the things which built up our nation. It is necessary to preserve them.

"I think," he continued, "we are reaching a crest of our civilization where we are exchanging these desirable things for ease and pleasure. We are burdened with overconfidence. We are satisfied

with our morality, our religion, the state of our education and the absolute fitness of all our ambitions. And when we find a few flaws in our civilization, we reassure ourselves by saying the percentage is low as compared with our general perfection."

William acknowledged this in his far-seeing frame of mind—in the spirit of the ancient mariner saved from shipwreck, who vowed a thousand candles to the Virgin. For the present his vision was clear.

He smiled a rather wry smile. "But," he continued, "suppose one did find that a nation's morals and energy and ambitions were on the decline, what can help to correct the condition?"

"Sometimes I believe," his father asserted, "only the hand of Heaven!" In recent years the old man had had little to do but to read and think, and he had turned his analytical mind to philosophizing and cataloguing the problems of the world. "England had fallen deep into a state of coma, in which comfort and ease were the things that concerned Englishmen most. It took a horrible war to reawaken them. It took the same horrible war to make heroic again a decadent France. Should our own nation continue to re-

gard lightly the sturdy things of life, it may take just such a cataclysm to set us again upon our proper path."

He sank into a sort of tired reverie, from which he presently aroused himself with a reminiscent smile on his lips. His mind had been going back many years.

"You remember a long while ago," he said, "you could not understand why a certain clergyman in his sermon said it was better to have carried the Ark of the Covenant upon human shoulders than upon a cart which relieved them of the burden of it. I think that is the danger of civilization. We make everything easy for ourselves, and our desire is always to do the easy thing rather than the right one."

He leaned forward in his chair. "What we all need, son, is to do the hard thing—to feel the weight of the Ark upon our shoulders. If each one of us remembers that, and, remembering it, does his own part, no adversity will be necessary to put us back upon the right road, for we shall not have strayed from it. A homely and obvious truth that; but—it is such little grains of sand that count—the little grains of sand."

He sank back into his chair, his tired eyes closed. His son looked at him with a real

physical pain in his heart. That soul would soon be passing on to another shore—and William somehow felt then that his great inheritance from him would be the responsibility of trying to live as he had lived. A great responsibility indeed—meaning the taking of the Ark from its comfortable, easy cart and the bearing of it upon unaccustomed shoulders.

CHAPTER XXIX

MARY SMITH

It was two days after the wreck, when the public mind had nearly forgotten it and the newspapers had swept their columns clear of it as mere history, except for a couple of square inches of type to say that the wrecking tug, aided by fine weather, was now gradually working the steamer off the bar, that once again the office of William Spade was opened as usual. It was just the same comfortable, prosaic business office, giving no sign of having had any connection, however indirect, with shipwreck and the high seas. Doubtless indeed, it had no interest in these things, being satisfied to be simply an efficient shelter for its tenants, without exhibiting any emotional concern over their adventures in other places.

The stoical calm of the place had a tranquilizing effect. Ruth, crossing that threshold as the clock somewhere was striking nine, found herself drawn into the usual groove—as one who stepped upon a regularly turning treadmill, whose

rhythmic monotony drove away thoughts of all other considerations and problems.

But not quite all. It was, indeed, difficult for her to remember clearly the day before yesterday. Then she was a different person. Then, instead of the present dainty Georgette crêpe waist (if that were the name of the Roentgen fabric of which it was made), the smart skirt and the trim tan shoes, all spotless and immaculate as if the lady therein incased had never been out in so much as a sprinkle of rain, she had worn a stiff rubber coat, a soiled shapeless hat and hip boots that blushed beneath no encumbering skirt, over which unmindful she let the sturdy sea break in drenching floods. It was difficult to remember this today when she, the braver of the tempest, carried a fragile parasol to hold against the sun.

Yet one thing she did not forget. Prosaic as was the present moment as compared with the adventurous ones now gone past, there was one avenue of excitement still to be traversed—a wide street capable of furnishing ample thrills. For at some moment the door to the office would open and through it would enter William Spade. Perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow—but as certainly as the setting of the day's sun.

What could be more disturbing than that?

For she must remember that, whatever adventures she had lived through since she had seen him last and whatever strength and bravery he had exhibited to her, the situation would be the same when he opened the door of the office as it had been the day he had closed it behind him. She had risked many things, but it was necessary for her to remember that her risking had not altered the fact that he was still the man who was operating against the employees of the Old Dominion Steel Company.

Meanwhile, Destiny, acting through the agency of a great railroad system, was bringing William Spade nearer and nearer to his office door. He also was thinking of the meeting with her. But while he looked forward to it with a mixture of embarrassment and pleasure, he looked forward to it with no uncertainty as to the attitude he should adopt toward her. He looked forward to it with pleasure because she was always first in his mind, with embarrassment because he had said to her, unresponding, that he loved her; and he would always be sensitive upon that point. His pride would not permit him therefore to cheapen his love (the bestowing of which he regarded as a mighty thing) by thrusting it, unwelcome, upon her.

When therefore, he placed his hand upon the outside handle of the door, that wood and glass barrier separated, though he could not have known it, two strong forces held in leash. But what they each saw as the door swung open was a slightly embarrassed young woman upon the one hand, and a slightly embarrassed young man upon the other.

But only for a moment. She rose quickly and came forward with an engaging frankness. He looked steadily into her eyes as he took her outstretched hand. Her color was high and those eyes bright, but there was no other indication of any disturbance or quickening of tempo in her. Instead when he released her hand she reached forward and calmly lifted the lapel of his coat.

"Where are they?" she asked.

"Where are what?" he returned, puzzled.

"The medals—for heroism. You should never venture out without them."

He met her mischievous glance. "I am grateful to you," he said. "You are the only person who has suggested medals."

"Be of good heart. Soon you will be getting so many you will dread the arrival of every post."

"I did nothing," he observed, "except to save my own life. That was not especially praiseworthy."

She seated herself at her desk. Upon the blotter she drew aimless arabesques. "I know what you did," she said, at length. "The papers have bored us to death with vain repetitions of your name. My young brother can quote their stories verbatim. You will find yourself a hero in his eyes."

"I am more than glad. If he can succeed in imparting the impression to his—but never mind," he broke off.

Her smile however, was alluringly quick. "Perhaps it is not necessary that he should," she said.

He laughed, and she, fearing that she had been too lenient with herself and with him added, in a manner that took her own personality completely out of the conversation. "Of course you know how lucky you are. All the young and beautiful girls aboard, having been saved from sudden death by you, owe their lives to you, and anyone of them you select is certainly obliged to marry you."

"What a revolting sacrifice!"

"Not at all. It is the reward you have earned.

It would certainly be a reflection upon them all for you not to pick out one of them."

"This is serious. But," he said, suddenly, "I am already promised."

"In what way?" she asked, faintly.

"My own life, you see, was in turn saved, and since I was the only single man aboard, I am peculiarly liable. One of the three rescuers was a girl. I am therefore, by your reasoning, pledged to a certain Mary Smith, if she wants me."

At this unexpected speech—a hit, as it were, wholly in the dark—the blood rushed to her face.

"Why do you blush?" he asked.

"I blush for your audacity in thrusting yourself on the Smith woman," she exclaimed truthfully. "However, see that you remember your obligation."

"I have no fears that I shall be held to it."

"Don't underrate your power of fascination. What is she like—this Mary Smith?"

"I don't know. There were three in the sailboat. They said one of them was a woman. She looked just like the others—a shapeless thing in a rubber coat."

Ruth hid her face in her hands. "Poor Mary Smith," she exclaimed, "if she could hear you now."

"Don't misunderstand me. She doubtless is an estimable and beautiful woman in her proper clothes, but—"

"Surely," she interrupted, "you do not mean to say hers were improper?"

"In the sense you mean they were proper, but they were unusual. But in her cotton-print dress and sunbonnet, I have no doubt she is all that could be desired."

She made a grimace that he did not understand.

"But why," he asked, "palm me off on poor defenseless Mary? Just to get rid of me?"

"To get rid of you?" she exclaimed, smiling.

"But what is there funny in that?"

She looked at him for a moment, the smile coming and going on her lips like a shimmer of sunlight.

"You see nothing funny in it, do you?" she asked.

"Not at all."

She sketched little circles upon the blotter before her. Then close to where the thumb of his hand rested on it she made an apex and drew a heart.

"It points to you," she murmured, idly. "In it I shall write Mary."

"Let me write it." He took a pencil from

the desk. "M" he said, writing "R," "A," writing "U." "R," writing "T," "Y," writing "H."

They both looked at the result silently. It was amusing while it was being made, but when it was finished and her name lay there in its incriminating frame, there was no suitable remark for either of them to make save words they did not wish to say. He rose abruptly.

"I am a poor speller," he exclaimed, smudging his thumb across the word. "That was a mistake."

CHAPTER XXX

"THIS IS WILLIAM SPADE"

When the noon mail came that day there was a letter in it from Warburton, who was out of town at the time, in regard to the Old Dominion Steel Company. It was the first letter that had ever come into the office upon that subject, and Ruth, spreading it out before her in order that she might list and brief it for her files, handled it as if it were unclean.

It would be good news for Spade—for it announced that the directors of the steel company had agreed to allow him two thirds of his claim, in order to settle the matter out of court. To her, knowing that the directors were merely blandly declaring how much the employees of the company should give up, it was anything but good news. The realization of the conflict of views between the man and herself awoke again her active distrust of him.

When Spade returned she watched him covertly through the open door, as if to read the thoughts

that passed through his mind as he read the letter. But from his calm demeanor she gleaned nothing. She supposed that beneath the surface he was calm and happy—and it was a painful realization.

But if she could have divined the real thoughts which obsessed that mind, she would have been filled with wonder. However, we seldom realize how complicated and difficult is the simple and straightforward course we lay out for others. Spade had visited his broker that morning and had found that that gentleman, who had obligated himself to the extent of some fifteen thousand dollars more than the value of the securities deposited with him by Spade, was not a little uneasy. He had taken Spade's personal credit and resources as security for this difference, but Spade's recent near approach to death had shown the evanescent character of such security, and had given him cause for no inconsiderable alarm.

He had therefore explained that it would be necessary for Spade, at the earliest moment, to furnish tangible security for the whole amount of his indebtedness. The stock he was required to deliver still showed no sign of decreasing in price. Indeed, there was a rumor now of an increased dividend upon it, which would push its

value up higher and make his losses even greater than at present. The broker had been insistent, therefore, that he secure the necessary funds at once and close up the deal before he sank deeper into debt. There was no use, in his words, in sending good money after bad. The man who could not acknowledge himself beaten when he was beaten was laying himself open to disaster.

The broker had thus succeeded in conveying the very positive information that William Spade's personal credit was no longer adequate, and the account could be allowed to run on no longer. In order to close the account there was fifteen thousand dollars to be paid immediately. And this was just fifteen thousand dollars more than he possessed.

Therefore the letter upon the desk, saying that the Old Dominion Steel Company had agreed to the immediate payment of eighty thousand dollars, had all the characteristics of a gift from Heaven. It swept away all his embarrassment. It paid his indebtedness and left him with a surplus of sixty-five thousand dollars. Instead of stripping him absolutely of all he owned and putting him in debt for a sum that to an impoverished man would be little short of stupendous, it carried him smoothly by that yawning abyss and

placed him safe and sure in his former position of ease and power.

Small wonder that the single sheet of letter paper before him was like a fairy gift! It took no great perspicuity to see that the success he had had was begotten by success. Were he reduced to poverty, his office depleted of its luxurious furnishing, his automobile sacrificed, his impressive apartment abandoned, his power to pay the price for mingling with people who needed his services cut off; the making of his fifteen or twenty thousand dollars a year would be impossible. If, added to this, were a debt that would absorb his surplus the moment it appeared, he would be like a man pinned down to earth by a great weight. It would take years to rid himself of the encumbrance, to accumulate again his possessions and to rebuild his shattered prestige —years of the best part of his life. It was no pleasant thing to look forward to spending those years merely in regaining lost ground, and having regained it, to find himself, the best part of his youth gone, simply ready to start in again.

A bitter prospect it was. But the letter upon his desk, offering an alternative, was no pleasant thing. It lay there pushed back to a distant spot like something polluted. He did not con-

sider it polluted, for he was accustomed to condemn nothing against which the case was not concise and clear. And the case against this letter was one that rested upon so infirm a thing as an impulse—a newly awakened loftiness of purpose implanted by the recent chastening of his soul.

Since, in the process of chastening his soul, he had agreed to accept the assistance of God, he was in return bound to acknowledge that God, and endeavor to act as He would desire him to act. He was learning over again the things he had been taught in his youth—which he had paraphrased and remodelled to fit his life. This new ethics disturbed him. It left him hanging between earth and sky. What was a mere theory to his mind, trained as it was to turn and move only in the presence of facts? Suppose he did concede that his life heretofore had been warped and selfish and that he was now required and bound to lay out a new course, how was he actually to lay the course? Admitting his responsibility to act in such a manner that his own success should not be purchased by far-reaching unhappiness among his fellow men, what of the sacrilege of turning his back upon business opportunity? The necessity and value of self-sacrifice was apparent. But should he give up his

pride and his self-reliance by standing aside instead of reaching out at the right moment to take his own?

He was coming into contact with the problem of reconciling theoretical Christianity with practical Christianity, and realizing that it was a problem that required not merely a moral sense but the exercise of the best power of his judgment. This was a thing he had never realized before—that conscience was at all dependent upon mentality, that the steering of a clean course between disregard and responsibility, upon the one hand, and Quixotism, upon the other, was a feat requiring all the skill of the ablest navigator.

Looking at it from this point of view he began to see the whole situation clearly. For the past few years he had been playing the game to win —at all costs. When he had been in college he would have scorned to take an unfair advantage to gain his point. He had been noted at athletics for his scrupulous sense of honor and justice. And when he was defeated he had taken it stoically, as a sportsman should. That was five years ago—a long while, it seemed. For since then he had lost his sportsmanship. He had taken the buffets of fate with a bitter heart and had sought to even up with whatever means and in

whatever manner came first to hand. William Spade had deteriorated.

The determination strengthened itself in him to regain lost ground—to wipe out the charge of unfairness. The time had come to do the hard thing—to feel the weight, as his father had said, of the Ark upon his shoulders. He was the grain of sand—that must struggle with the others not to be washed away from the straight beach, so that the great land might remain intact.

With the heroic idea hot in his mind he did unpleasant things that afternoon, lest it should cool before he had followed its impulse. It was a big deed he planned. But the bigger the deed, the greater the proof it was of the sincerity of his soul. And as he proceeded about the work, he rejoiced in a certain sombre yet sweeping satisfaction in being right.

Three melancholy things he did to test himself and to lay the fuel for the final burning of his bridges. He visited an old and familiar neighborhood in the shabby part of town he had once known so well, and, with no bitterness of spirit, engaged the same little dingy room looking out upon the same dingy back yards. He was to be poor now—as he had been in those days—and he must make slender funds go far. He

visited an auction establishment and made arrangements to have the luxurious and expensive furnishings of his apartment and his office sold. And, as a final touch, he stopped at his club, where he found, as he had expected, a man who had some time before offered to buy his automobile. The man wrote him a check and William, leaving the car at the curb, walked back to his office, a chastened spirit, a flagellant, yet contented.

The office was deserted, as he entered it at half past five. He sat before the telephone and held the receiver in his hand, for a long while not taking it from its hook. It was a momentous deed—and irretrievable when once done. Then with set jaw, he removed it quickly and called a number.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Warburton," he said, when the connection was made. "This is William Spade."

There was a moment of delay, during which the telephone hummed its meaningless song.

"Warburton," he said, presently, when the lawyer had answered—and his own voice was as hard and metallic as a steel bar, "write a letter to the Old Dominion Steel Company and say in an absolutely clear and irrefutable way, that upon further consideration I feel that I have no claim upon

them in connection with the stock formerly held by the holding company and that if the employees in the Company are given the stock to which they are rightfully entitled I shall not expect them to pay me eighty thousand dollars or any part of it on that account."

"Man, are you crazy?" exploded the other.

"No. I know what I am doing. Don't argue with me. Send a copy of this letter to the lawyer who represents the employees of the company. And telephone me as soon as the letters are mailed."

For half an hour he sat like a man of stone in his chair. Then the telephone rang and a few commonplace words told him it was all over. The letters were mailed. He rose from his desk —the desk that was no longer his, and half-dazed by the magnitude of his act, descended to take the street-car home—to the apartment that was no longer his, furnished with the pleasant and much loved things that were no longer his. He was possessed of nothing at all now in all the world—save his own great and unbelievable self-respect.

CHAPTER XXXI

DUSK

The September sun sank low as William Spade sat in his leather-cushioned chair, looking out unseeing across the green square. The western sky, which his eyes did not note, flamed red. The long, horizontal rays streamed across the room and fell caressingly upon the gorgeous Chinese embroidery on the opposite wall—the sleeve of a Mandarin's coat. They moved searchingly over the wall as if glancing for the last time at each treasure and hanging, which might not be there on the morrow. Fainter and fainter grew their radiance until suddenly they vanished from the wall and went on upon their endless journey around the earth. Dusk came quickly over the city and then the darkness of a starlit night neutralized by the glow of the street-lamps below. All dark were the rooms he called home. It was a melancholy thing to leave them—to leave the things that for the past few years he had called

life. But he felt no regret. There was no step of the day he would not have retaken.

As he sat there a greater cause for sadness was brought him—though not an unexpected thing nor one that he felt could have been postponed for long, but nevertheless a cause of sadness. When he received the message, almost his first thought was of stern satisfaction that he had done the thing his father would have wished him to do. He had done the hard thing—he had taken the Ark from the cart and bore it now on his shoulders. The yellow message he held in his hands told of the serious and apparently the last illness of William Spade, Senior. And, expected as it had been, it came as a shock to him —a shock that swept from his spirit all the leaning toward bitterness that came as a result of his recent act.

There were many things to be done before he could leave the city at midnight. He sat again at the desk in his office writing certain letters and framing a note, bristling with instructions, to Ruth. With almost no emotion he hurried a letter to his brokers telling them to buy Consolidated Steel at the market price to cover his unfortunate speculation. In the note he explained that the sale of his effects and the money he

would be able to borrow upon his life insurance would provide ten thousand dollars against the present shortage of fifteen thousand. For the additional five thousand he would give his personal note which he would pay at the earliest possible moment.

When he had finished these, finding there were no postage stamps in the usual drawer or that Ruth had changed the place where they were kept, he put the letters he had written upon her desk, to be mailed in the morning—except the one to the brokers, which he decided to carry with him, as it was necessary that it be mailed that evening so that the order might be placed before the opening of the Exchange in the morning.

He laid the letter upon his desk. Then something impelled him to write upon the sheet which contained the instructions for Ruth, a few more lines. She was the only person in the world in whom he wished to confide when he was in trouble. He had thought at first he would not speak of his personal affairs to her, but found that it was impossible for him to go away without telling her that it was his father's serious illness that was the cause of his going and explaining, in a few awkwardly put but gloriously sincere words that though he had been expecting this for a long while

and knowing it must come, yet now when it came he was unprepared for it. He was certain that to the end of his life he would always be expecting to hear from his father as one alive, that he would be expecting to go to him and ask him his advice—that after he was dead he would never believe he could be gone.

He used up more of his remaining time than he should have in doing this. But if that letter were full of love for his father it was full of love also for her. His eyes were moist with tears as he finished it. But he had little chance to think of what was in his heart. He seized his handbag and hurried for the car. Thirty minutes later he rolled out of the station upon the heavy train of Pullmans. And the letter to his brokers lay upon his desk.

CHAPTER XXXII

A BEAUTIFUL WORLD

The early morning was crisp with the unaccustomed chill of September. The clear air revealed the far depths of the solid blue sky, long hidden behind the humid mist of summer. William's footsteps echoed down the still streets, unpeopled save for a single workman with Stillson wrenches in his hand who nodded to him with the freemasonry of one early riser to another.

These streets upon which he now trod were the haunts of his early boyhood—pathetically shrunken somehow from his memory of them. This comparatively narrow street was the impressive broad one of his recollection. Over there the dingy, squalid stable was the same place, unchanged, whose odor—whose perfume rather—of horses and harness, had stirred his young imagination, whose size and magnificence had then seemed almost unattainable. It seemed, too, an unnecessary sacrilege that the drug store at the corner

—the meridian and equator of the boyish geography—where he and his companions had spent their infrequent pennies and in the light shining through whose red and green vases, they had basked pleasantly in the dusk—should now be occupied by an impossibly drab dying and cleaning establishment. Or that the open lot upon whose tiny turf they had played a constricted sort of baseball should now be obliterated by a neat brick structure wherein, unmindful of the affront he offered to sentimental memories, plied his trade a creature nominated upon his sign as a Merchant Tailor.

As William swung around this corner, he came into view of his father's house—the old house in which he was born. Each time he saw it thus, among all the changing surroundings, it seemed not to have changed at all. Its marble steps were snowy white, its brick front was painted as of yore with shining red paint in imitation of brick, and the thin mortar joints between, still further to carry out the semblance, were lined with white paint in imitation of mortar, so that the general effect was as of a piece of stage scenery representing a brick house. This had always been considered in the community as the spruce and neat thing to do, and the failure to apply the disguise

at the proper time was a sign of general shiftlessness.

He pulled the white-handled bell knob projecting from the wooden jamb, which started a reverberating jingle somewhere in the bowels of the house. A potent memory rose as the tintinabulation began, for he remembered that in other days it had been necessary to run the instant such a deed had been accomplished.

The house within was unchanged—the marble topped table in the hall with its bell-jar encasing the same wax flowers, the same gilt-framed mirror over it supported upon a nail the head of which was adorned and enriched by the same pearl-white button. His early impression of the magnificence and grandeur of this ensemble, all his sophistication had never been entirely able to dispel.

In the hall dwelt the same familiar odor, coming perhaps from the reminiscence of camphor balls in the hangings, or from the balsam pillow which adorned the haircloth sofa in the parlor or from the chintz colored cedar chest in the upper hall or from a combination of them all. It made him feel, at any rate, that it was but yesterday that he was a small boy tobogganing down those padded stairs upon his mother's ironing board.

He ascended the steps now, his footfalls making no sound—into the well-remembered semi-darkness. Waiting for him at the top was his mother —a little thinner, a little grayer but not apparently older than the lady who fifteen years before used to await him there. When he stood upon the step next to the top, she put her arms about him and held him in her tight, silent embrace. No words came to her lips to express the towering emotions in her. The comfort of his presence was what was in her mind and that was not an idea, to be spoken of in words, but a miraculous blessing, which gave new life to her wearied body and soul.

The sick man lay upon the familiar carved walnut bedstead. His thin, white hand rested lifelessly upon the counterpane. His eyes, unheeding, stared steadily before him as if already he were seeing visions not of this world. William's eyes clouded as he bent over and laid his strong hand upon the white, shrunken one.

A light of recognition shone suddenly in the eyes and consciousness, summoning its strength, broke through its enshrouding curtain. The old, happy buoyant smile appeared for a moment upon the sick man's lips.

"Lift me up, son," he said.

William raised him to a sitting position and, supporting him there with a strong arm and shoulder pressed against him, watched him intently, wonderingly. The elder Spade, lovingly, almost wistfully, stared out at the gold light on the world without—on the sturdy tree that he as a young man had planted by the sidewalk, which had grown and prospered, keeping pace with him, as he had grown and prospered. But now it was in its very prime, while he, no longer its contemporary, had come in sight of the end. Then with a sigh he asked to be put down again upon his pillow, where he lay breathing heavily.

"It is a beautiful world," he murmured, weakly, "a beautiful world."

A beautiful world. Those old, unwearied eyes were looking forward and backward from this point where his soul prepared to change habitations and seeing in each direction a vision only of happiness—the prospect of the world to come and the memory of the world that was past. And yet the world that he was leaving had buffetted him roughly and crushed his fondest hopes. It was a glorious fact that, having suffered more than his share of adversity and disappointment, the only thought that occurred to him looking back was that it had been a beautiful place. What

more potent certificate for admission to Heaven than to carry with him such a memory of the place where he had been tried in the fire—and not found wanting.

From then on until dusk gathered, William and his mother watched the one-time powerful machine slowly running down. The labored breathing, hoarse and echoing grimly in the room, slowly decreased as the darkness drew about them. Until at length just as the distant pleasant chimes he loved to hear were striking the hour, it merged quietly, almost imperceptibly into silence.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE LETTER

As soon as there was a moment of leisure—and that did not come until the household had retired to their rooms, William wrote a letter to the person who came first in his thoughts, to whom, depressed now by the silence of the gloomy house, he turned instinctively for comfort. It was the reaching-out of one yearning to unburden his soul, who nevertheless, confronted with cold paper, gropes for the words.

"My Dear Ruth:

"My father died this evening. With him passed out of my life an influence I thought was retarding me, but which was in fact uplifting me. He represented the spirit of a by-gone generation, while I have been absorbing the spirit of this very present generation. I have heard it said that my father was short-sighted and over-trusting—one man said stupid—I see now that it was to his credit that he was so. He was honest

and fair-playing in the midst of a tribe who made money upon the misfortunes or the mishaps of others—the same who lately have been speculating in and cornering food products until they have forced the public to pay out higher prices, who rolled up their sleeves when war broke out in Europe and turned it callously into a money making occurrence. It was they who, discovering South America deprived of European trade, descended in hordes upon Brazil and Argentina, whom they conceived to be in hard straits. They took orders for first class goods on rapid delivery, and shipped third class goods when they were ready. They have made the name of America stand for misrepresentation and fraud and short-change methods throughout the world. They have set up a figure of Uncle Sam as a senile old man, grasping and miserly, with ice-water instead of blood in his veins.

"My father came of the generation that still remembered the clipper ships and the world-wide reputation of American thrift and fairness. He stood for this idea, and I did not know it. It took you, who stand in my mind for the same things, and one other of whom I shall tell you, to reveal it to me.

"And now I know that with the sturdiness of

the old generation went a certain trust in God, and with the careless self-sufficiency of the new generation goes a feeling that God is unnecessary. The need of religion and faith comes with adversity, which we as a nation have not had for fifty years. It took a personal adversity to make this apparent to me.

"I tell you this because I should like you to know that my ideas are changing. I understand that I have been following the wrong influences. It is an overpowering realization and one that leaves me not a little upset as to myself. But I do know now that I have been sailing toward the wrong beacon. Whether I shall be able to shape my life. . . . But that is the problem now before me. . . ."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ANSWER

To Ruth Dunbar, reading the letter late the following day, his mind and heart were clear.

She could not but harbor a compelling pride in the fact that she should be the one person to be admitted to close communion with him. It was a distinction whose realization thrilled her until she seemed to feel the quickened blood in her veins. But that was not her greatest emotion. It was rather a motherly concern for his happiness and peace of mind.

She wished for power to render him comfort. She took his sorrow over into her own life, as if it were her right and prerogative to suffer when he suffered. The grief which now had come to him drew her to him with an unexpected force. It seemed as if the old state of affairs, in which his life touched hers at but a few points and at all others went about concerns that had nothing to do with her, was gone. His life ran now parallel to hers everywhere, and all its concerns

were her concerns. In fact his joys and sorrows, she began to realize, were more important to her than her own.

The realization of this was beatific. For the moment it seemed to raise her out of the mere world. The simple sincerity of his letters, explaining in homely fashion how much his father's life had meant to him, gave her a clear view into his heart, and she felt now that it was a big, strong heart, with no evil intent in it. If he were in the wrong it was because he had made the wrong diagnosis of life—because he had drawn wrong conclusions concerning the world and its people. She no longer saw virtue in standing aloof from him, convinced that what he needed most was her assistance. And, believing that his warping was mental rather than moral, she found herself in a frame of mind to give that assistance. What right had she, she thought, to judge him for a misdeed, when he had not judged her for her own misdeeds? She was not a perfect person. Why should she expect perfection of him? The heart within was the thing she must consider. For the rest, it was a surpassing joy for her to think that he needed the clear moral insight that nature had given her, and had clouded, at least temporarily, for him. The mother instinct

was strong in her. She loved him, and he needed her—it swept away all obstacles. Moreover, he needed her most now when his greatest friend and counselor had left him.

With all these thoughts running excitedly through her brain, she took a sheet of paper from the drawer beside her and endeavored to write them in a letter to him. But that composition, when she reread it, did not express the comfort and sympathy she was so eager to send. It was cold. It was a mere letter—ink upon paper—instead of the assurance of the new fellowship, whose strength and responsiveness to the confidence he had placed in her, she wished him to know. But how could she, who was no trained writer, express this without seeming weak or else strained. It was a subject too near her heart. She destroyed the sheet. She would let the matter mellow in her mind, and, in the morning, perhaps the words would come to her.

The morning brought, not words, but concerns of the office, which kept her busy. Very early in the day there arrived by messenger a heavy manilla envelope, quite fatly filled, marked with much emphasis, "Personal," and bearing Warburton's name printed in the upper left-hand corner. She called up the lawyer's office immediately to

explain that Spade was away and to ask whether the papers in the envelope were urgent and what should be done about them. But Warburton was also out of town. No one in his office knew about the matter except that he had left very explicit instructions to have the packet delivered the first thing in the morning.

Ruth was considerably disturbed. There was no way of telling whether it was a matter that demanded immediate attention or not. She was unwilling to forward it to Spade, who, she was certain, ought not to be bothered with such matters unless it was certain they could not wait. If it had been urgent, Warburton should have telephoned to find out whether her employer would be there to give it his attention. Therefore, although not without some uneasiness, she laid the brown envelope upon his desk to await his coming.

In doing this, she made a discovery, which brought her face to face with another problem. She discovered, under some papers which had hitherto hidden it from her, a letter addressed in Spade's handwriting to his brokers. She was conversant enough with stock transactions to know that such a letter could not but be important, especially if he were now under the impression

that it had been mailed. A moment of hesitation—and she ripped it open. From the number of shares mentioned, she saw it was an order involving many thousand dollars. In his haste, Spade had forgotten it—and the consequences might be serious.

She telephoned to the broker and made an appointment with him to see her immediately. Arriving there, she laid the letter before him and explained the circumstances.

Mr. LeFevre drummed upon the arms of his chair. "It is difficult to advise you in this case," he said.

"Would Mr. Spade naturally wish the order to be carried out, in your opinion?"

"It is a matter of judgment. Under present conditions, whatever I should advise might lay me open to censure later on."

Ruth hesitated. "Has something happened since he wrote this?"

The broker glanced at the date. "Very much," he observed. He made a quick, crisp explanation of an unexpected turn of events. Ruth, to whom the details of the affair were unknown, was taken aback by the statement.

"But," continued the broker, "as to whether to

buy now or to wait for further developments, only Mr. Spade can decide."

Only Mr. Spade could decide. This was too important for him not to be informed of it at once. She must telegraph him. At the same time she could mention the envelope from his lawyer. She reflected, however, that this fact would mean nothing to him. She decided not to mention it. She wrote out the message. It took many words to explain and the telegram was rather incoherent after she had written it. In the end she did not send it.

The simplest manner of caring for the matter might have been to send him the papers from Warburton by registered mail and simply telegraph that his letter to the stock-brokers had not been mailed and the order therefore not executed. In a cool, calm and merely efficient moment, she might have decided to do this. But she was not now calm nor cool nor merely efficient. She was thinking of many things, and the two reasons, furnished by the packet from Warburton and by the forgotten letter, were a plausible excuse for the conclusion that her personal presence was required—an excuse that avoided the issue of having to admit the third and real reason.

There was a train at twelve-thirty which would take her, give her three hours in the city where he was, and permit her to be home before ten o'clock that night. She tried to believe it was the business matter that was urgent but scarcely succeeded—for other things occupied so broad a space in her heart.

CHAPTER XXXV

RUTH TAKES OFF HER HAT

In the waning afternoon, as the mellow autumn sun was beginning to drop toward his unpicturesque horizon of chimneys and tin roofs and the houses on the east side of the street, catching the flood of his golden light, were transformed for the moment into glowing gorgeous structures, picturesque as no man had intended them to be, Ruth found herself walking in a strange city, her heart beating almost audibly beneath the corn-colored silk coat, as she searched among the sunlit structures for the house whose number was graven on her mind. A disconcerting feeling of being about to make a courting call disturbed her equilibrium. A sense of humiliation enveloped her—but it was a pleasurable and exciting humiliation—a self-abasement full of thrills.

She had telegraphed him that she was coming, but had purposely named no train so that he would not meet her at the station. As she put her foot upon that first step, the walnut door

swung open and a smiling, sturdy creature stepped forward to meet her, seizing both her hands with a gentle firmness that sent a glow over her whole body. Very near he was, even in that bright street, to gathering her up, unbidden, into his arms. It took but one glance into his eyes to read it there—and resentment and anger and disappointment were the things that were not in her heart because of it.

The door closed behind them, and he was still holding her hands, looking down into her face. There were tears—strange symptoms—perilously close to the surface in his eyes. He blinked rapidly, terribly embarrassed lest he should lose his composure, and not quite knowing why the mere experience of seeing her should have broken him up—not realizing that he had been furnishing cheerfulness and comfort for his mother through trying hours and that subconsciously he had been craving the same thing himself—and that there was only one human who could give it to him.

The hidden tears were stirring eloquence to her. They made transparent the windows of his soul. She did not realize that her two gloved hands, clasped tightly together, were held in his strong grip, any more than if that were their usual position when he spoke to her. She was transcended.

She seemed no longer to be the plain, work-a-day Ruth Dunbar, but a new person whose feet rested upon a cloud and whose heart throbbed with happiness.

"My mother," she heard him saying, "is asleep now. She will come down presently. Meanwhile, you must take off your hat."

Her eyes met his. "I shall need my hands for that."

That made it doubly hard for him to give them up. He attempted to carry them to his lips.

"Not my glove," she whispered. The color surging to her face, she stripped off the offending covering, and felt his lips upon her fingers. She dared not meet his glance, but turned away from him, disconcerted by the turmoil in her.

He took the coat as she slipped it from her shoulders. Standing before the gilt-framed mirror, she raised her hands above her head to unpin the small turban-like hat. It was an important and appealing thing to him to have her there taking off her hat in the house which was full of so many unfading memories of his boyhood. It was symbolic—as if by that ceremony, she agreed that it was necessary for her to visit the place because it did contain memories of him. She seemed to feel his thoughts and, having cast a

covert glance at his reflection in the mirror, turned her head to meet his glance. He moved toward her until his shoulder touched lightly against her.

"I appreciated your letters," she said, in a low tone.

"I would have given anything to have seen you on either of the last two days," he said simply. "I wanted you."

The significance of the speech—just words—was nothing to them. They had mounted to high places, unassisted by speeches. It did not seem epochal to him merely to say that he wanted her, for that was the great salient fact of his life. To have him say it did not thrill her more than she had already been thrilled, because it was not alone the fact that he wanted her which filled her with content, but the fact that she had already decided that she was right in wanting him.

"Why was I not lucky enough," she whispered, willing to say anything, "to come at one of the times when you wanted me?"

"You could not have avoided it." All attempt at originality or of thoughtful speech vanished now. They followed a beaten path—worn smooth by many thousand feet, heading toward

the almost unbelievable goal where was writ the promise of eternal happiness.

"You want me—always?" she murmured.

His hand was now upon her further shoulder. The ancient mirror that had seen him in most of the epochs of his life, beginning with his first descent from the floor above in the arms of his nurse, saw now what it certainly would have considered, had it been given it to consider, the great climax.

"Always," was the single word it might have heard him say. After that magic sesame, it saw presently white arms about his neck and a red-brown head upon his shoulder resting unmoving—overcome by a little bit of shame and a great deal of stirring happiness.

During the moments that they stood there, time and place existed not at all for them. The publicity of the hallway brought no confusion to them. In fact, they were not realizing that the world contained other breathing human beings than themselves. Whether this finally did occur to them or whether a gracious and invisible Providence simply moved them on to more appropriate places, was not clear in retrospection. Ruth, however, presently did find herself sitting

upon the slippery hair-cloth sofa in the parlor, looking and feeling in that precentennial atmosphere, like a quaint old daguerreotype come to life.

She drew her arm through his and gazed with an almost child-like interest at the strange objects in the room—the old print of Shakespeare and his friends in a monumental gold frame; a cunningly wrought sampler whose quaint subject was a map in several colors showing the extent of the Union in 1847; a lock of hair in a velvet frame; a marble clock on a marble mantel, and a marble-topped table with a Rogers group upon it. Concerning these she asked innumerable questions, interrupting without apology his perusal of the papers in the big brown envelope which she had brought him. If he did not reply she scarcely noticed.

He stopped suddenly to look squarely into the blithe, smiling face. "But you had not seen these," he asserted, with a grave wonder. They were the papers and correspondence upon the subject of his case against the Old Dominion Steel Company, among them a copy of the last letter he had written to the Company, repudiating his claim.

"No. I hadn't seen them. "Why?"

"I don't understand. Why are you sitting there with your hand upon my arm, then? For a piece of wrong doing of mine, you once said I could not be considered as a—possible husband for you."

The smiling eyes grew serious. "I have grown older and wiser," she said, slowly. "I am not your judge. I am simply the woman who loves you. I believe the heart in there," laying her hand lightly on his coat, "is big and strong and true. It will do what it thinks is right."

He struggled with a choking in his throat. "I shall try," he said unsteadily, "to deserve your confidence."

He found that that was all that he could say. He simply held her tightly to him, a great pride and joy welling up in his breast at the mark of her simple faith in him. It was a joy that words could only have belittled. He held her until at length she pushed back from him with hands upon his shoulders and turned a smiling face up to his. But her eyes too were bright with tears.

She could keep her other piece of information from him no more. His face clouded, like a man drawn into another world, when she mentioned the letter to the broker. She explained that he had forgotten to mail it and she had had

an interview with Mr. LeFevre upon the subject. Had he seen a newspaper in the last two days? No. Then she would have pleasant information for him. His steel stock had had a spectacular drop. In the words of the broker, instead of losing his last penny, he would save out of the situation more than thirty thousand dollars!

William was dazed. He rose and walked up and down the room.

"After all," he said at length, when words came to him, "blind Providence is a better caretaker for a man's business than his own vaunted foresight."

What a creed for you, William Spade, who but a short time back had spoken of man's own invincible power!

He told her then of the events that had led up to the writing of the letter to the brokers—his decision to give up the claim against the Steel Company, his consequent prospect of straitened circumstances, and his endeavor to clear the slate of as many obligations as possible so that he might start anew. It was a story full of straightforward heroism, but he told it haltingly, embarrassed at the magnitude of it and its results. And she, feeling that it was now her own vicarious

act, restrained her joy and pride in it and in him. It did not occur to her to congratulate him or to praise him, for she had given in advance her opinion. The only well chosen thing that came to her lips—ah, well it was not spoken, and the pressure of her soft arms about his neck was reward for much suffering.

At last she drew back to look into his face. Her practical self asserted itself. "But your automobile is gone," she exclaimed, "and it was the apple of your eye."

He waved his hand to sweep away such idle considerations.

"I am glad of it," he said. "It was too big for our lives. You and I will not require ninety horsepower to convince the world that we are being properly transported from place to place."

She might have told him this was an epigram, a specification for right living, an expression of belief in the things in which she wanted him to believe. But she merely laughed contentedly, her lower lip drawn in between her white teeth.

THE END

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